AU-gust Writing Challenge 2023

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/49037731.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	Major Character Death
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationship:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe - Regency, Alternate Universe - Magic, Other Additional Tags to Be Added, Alternate Universe - Vampire, Alternate Universe - Werewolf, Serial Killer Hannibal Lecter, Actor Hannibal Lecter, Hannibal Lecter is a Cannibal, Alpha/Beta/Omega Dynamics, Pet Sitter Hannibal, Fluff, Topless Maid Will Graham, Best Customer Hannibal, Teacher-Student Relationship, Pre-Slash, Monster Hannibal Lecter, Character Death
Language:	English
Series:	Part 4 of AU-gust Challenge
Collections:	AU-gust 2023
Stats:	Published: 2023-08-01 Completed: 2023-08-31 Words: 35,799 Chapters: 31/31

AU-gust Writing Challenge 2023

by slashyrogue

Summary

A collection of my daily AU-gust Writing Challenge fics/ficlets filled with many different types of Hannigram AUs

Day 1: Joker - Shipwrecked

Count Hannibal Lecter stood on the deck of the ship that would take him home again, The Wolf Trap, and could only smile as he thought of his revenge.

It had taken a decade of finding himself to bring him here, now, and as he anticipated the start to his plan he only hoped he got to see them suffer.

After all, they'd taken everything from him.

He could still hear their screams, still see Mischa's eyes as she was dragged from him into the dark, and could still taste her on his tongue no matter how many took her place.

No.

This was his purpose, his path, and when he finally wormed his way into the upper echelon of society back home he'd tear them all apart from the inside. He could hardly wait to begin.

He sighed, feeling the cold wind on his face, and nodded to passersby as they acknowledged him. The journey had hardly begun, it would take weeks to reach home again, and yet he lived for the feel of the boat as it swayed on the water.

Hannibal sighed, closing his eyes, and leaned forward to breathe in deep when someone grabbed his waist pulling him back again.

"WHOA!"

He nearly stumbled as he turned, ready to yell at anyone who dared disturb him, and froze at the sight of his assailant.

The man was his height, younger than him by some years he could tell, and wore poorly made clothes smudged with dirt. Yet he was the most beautiful creature Hannibal had ever seen in his entire life. His eyes seemed otherworldly, the color changing in the turn of the light, and his smile made Hannibal's heart skip a beat.

"You nearly fell there, fella," he said, smiling, "Gotta be careful."

Hannibal blushed. "I…I was merely smelling the sea. I…I did not realize. I was lost in thought."

The man's smile faded. "Are you alright?"

"I…"

"GRAHAM! GET BACK TO WORK!"

The man turned, blushing, and smiled at Hannibal sadly, taking out a rag from seemingly out of nowhere. "I have to…good day, Sir," he said, "I hope your journey goes alright, and…be careful of the edge. You never know when you might fall off into who knows where and…it would be rough swim."

He frowned. "Thank you, I…"

Graham turned as a tall man came bounding his way, and Hannibal was angry when Graham took off without another word. He was obviously the help, a worker down below perhaps, and yet Hannibal was ready to argue his stay.

No one had ever captivated him as Graham had for mere moments, and as he watched the beautiful creature run off he ached to call him back. Even a dalliance, a mere stolen pleasure, with such a beauty would be a privilege as he made his way home again.

But it was, it seemed, not to be.

Hannibal looked out into the water again, the excitement he'd felt earlier faded, and thought perhaps he'd head back to his cabin. He turned, nodding to others who he'd seen on deck several times, and was nearly at the stairs when the entire ship shook as if the devil had hold. He turned, wide eyed, as the entire ship began to sway out of nowhere. There was nothing around them, no obstacle they'd hit or another ship in their way, yet the ship seemed unable to stay steady.

"EVERYONE GET BELOW!"

They were ushered en masse, screams echoing around him, and as he ran for his cabin he wondered if perhaps he'd never reach home again.

Would his final resting place be the water?

Would he never be able to get revenge for his family?

Hannibal blinked back tears as his lip curled, running as he pushed others by, and when the water began to fill he saw no end in sight.

This was truly his end.

He struggled to swim as the water got higher, ignoring the bodies as they piled up from fools too stupid to know better, and finally lost consciousness just as someone screamed words he'd remember the rest of his days.

"THIS IS THE END!"

Hannibal woke up in the dark.

He coughed, unable to see, and shivered as he grabbed wet sand around him.

Hands came out of nowhere, pulling him up, and he tried to lash out but a voice made him pause.

“Whoa, whoa!” the voice said, grasping him, “You’re safe now. Calm down, fella.”

Hannibal froze.

“Graham.”

A flick of a match illuminated his savior, and to his surprise there in the darkness was Graham. He looked shaken, yet still smiled, and even the cut on his cheek did little to hide his beauty. Graham’s eyes widened as he saw Hannibal’s face come into view.

“It’s you.”

He smiled.

“Yes, it…is indeed me.”

He sat up fully, coughing, and Graham hit his back as he let out some shaken breaths.

“Are we…the only ones here on shore?”

“Yeah,” Graham said, his voice rough, “I…I could feel some bodies in the dark but…I’m losing matches and…I’m shocked they’re not wet. I…I shoulda found wood and made camp but I…I wanted to…”

“Find someone,” Hannibal said, meeting his gaze.

“Yeah,” he said, suddenly smiling, “I guess you didn’t need to be saved this time, fella. You saved yourself.”

Hannibal smiled. “I think, perhaps, some god of the sea dragged us both here. Perhaps…we have another purpose.”

His heart skipped a beat when Graham laughed.

“Maybe you’re right,” he said, holding out his hand, “Graham,” he said, “Will Graham.”

Hannibal took his hand. “Hannibal,” he whispered, his voice hoarse, “Count Hannibal Lecter.”

Will’s eyes widened. “A count? I’ll be damned.”

He blushed.

“Damned, no,” he said, still holding Will’s hand as he brought it to his lips, “But perhaps…we’ve both been blessed.”

Will blushed, taking his hand back as he stood, helping him do the same as his smile faded. “We’ll see about that.”

Yes.

They would see, wouldn’t they?

Day 2: Immortals

He doesn't know why he's nervous.

Will stands outside the door trying to calm down his fast-beating heart, reciting the same shit by rote he has for decades now, and tells himself he's going to make it through just fine. He's never botched one of these check-ins, not ever, and yet every single time he worries this will be the one that gets him in trouble.

The guard opens the door, the cut of his dark brown suit the same as all the others outside of every door in this long never-ending hallway.

"You can come in now."

His robotic voice makes Will even more nervous, and he steps inside taking a deep breath only to look up sharply.

"Oh."

Will has been to these meetings every single month for nearly eighty years, and yet not once in the last twenty has he seen the one face he thought he never would again. He blinks back tears as he walks forward, taking in the ten seated immortal monsters who every year go through hundreds of others like him to be sure they're safe to live among the humans. Their faces are all familiar, all safe, save for one.

Hannibal Lecter.

The vampire who left him in the night two decades ago and never once let Will know why.

The creature who makes him ache, whose scent he wants to drown in, and who rejected him after only one night together.

One magical, special night.

The woman in the middle of the council holds up Will's file, Bedelia DuMaurier, a vampire like Hannibal himself, and reads with a smile.

"Will Graham, werewolf, works in the FBI solving…" she looks up, "Murders? Are you a corpse sniffing hound then?"

Will grits his teeth.

"No, ma'am," he says, not looking at Hannibal though he can feel the vampire's eyes on him, "I…I get the whole of it through scent but I…I can…"

"He can see the killers," Hannibal finishes, making Will bite back a moan at the sound of his voice, "Can't you, Mister Graham?"

Will tries to hold in his tears as turns to look at him. "Yes, Sir."

Hannibal's smile fades as they look at each other.

"Do you…live alone, Mister Graham?"

"Yes," he says, shaking now, "I…I don't have a mate."

"Odd," Abel Gideon remarks, his voice almost a cough which is not uncommon for ghouls, "For a werewolf to not have a pack."

“I have dogs,” he says, trying not to glare, “I…I don’t need a mate. I’m perfectly fine on my own…Sir.”

“Will,” Hannibal says, his voice like honey in Will’s ears, “Have you…not…a companion? No one to warm your bed at night or…”

Will cannot hold in his tears as he looks at him and Bedelia scoffs.

“I see the puppy is angry,” she says, “You’re not usually so skittish, Mister Graham. Do you have something to hide?”

“No, I…”

“You’re crying,” she taunts, “Any werewolf in tears is obviously hiding something underneath his puppy dog exterior. I think perhaps he…”

“NO!” Hannibal growls, making everyone look at him.

Bedelia stares at Hannibal angrily as Will feels like he’ll shift any second.

“Are you questioning the council’s decisions, Mr. Lecter? This is your first year as a member and I’d hate to have you dissolved so soon on your first day. You’ve been exemplary so far,” she looks at Will, “Or is there something about this one? Do you like puppies?”

Hannibal growls. “He is no puppy, Ms. DuMaurier, and you are out of line. This is not his first time, and you know he’s safe. Let him through.”

“I think perhaps…’

“SHUT UP MRS. KOMEDA!” Hannibal yells, “OR I WILL SHUT YOUR MOUTH FOR YOU!”

His eyes are red, angry, and Will can smell his scent so strong his cock is heavy between his legs. He falls to the floor, growling, and several things happen at once. Two other werewolves on the council get up, growling, and start to argue with Bedelia, Tobias Budge and Randall Tier, while Will hears a crash to the floor just as he feels his clothes ripping.

And a second later Hannibal has hold of him.

“Breathe, Will,” he whispers, his scent making Will dizzy, “Breathe for me.”

Will’s vision is yellow, and yet he sees Hannibal so clearly, he whimpers.

“I hate you so much.”

A dark tear falls out of Hannibal’s eye, and he realizes that vampires cry blood.

Why is Hannibal crying?

“I know, Mylimasis,” Hannibal whispers, “I know, but…you cannot shift here. Breathe.”

Will breathes in and out, calming, and Hannibal nuzzles his cheeks making him purr as his body relaxes.

“HANNIBAL EXPLAIN YOURSELF!” Bedelia yells.

Will’s eyes are heavy as he hears Hannibal growl.

“He is mine,” he says, “And no one will throw him down with the discards. If you do not trust him among the humans, then he’s remanded to my care as of right now.”

Will’s confusion makes him sigh. “What? You…”

“You can’t make that choice, Hannibal, you…”

“If you do not, I will kill every single person in this room. You know what I can do.”

Everyone freezes.

“You’re banned from this council,” Bedelia says, her voice shaking, “And…I never want to see that mongrel puppy again. He’s your problem now.”

Will purrs as Hannibal pulls him up, nuzzling his neck. “Done.”

He barely has time to take in his fate as Hannibal lifts him, confusing him even more, and he’s carried through the exit like a ragdoll.

“What..what did…how…”

“Sleep, Will. Just sleep.”

The rest of Will’s worries fade away, and yet he has no idea of his new ones.

Not that it matters when he feels so good.

Day 3: Writer

"...nothing here will *ever* be vegetarian. Bon appetit."

Several laughs made Will wince, clutching his notebook as they butchered his words, as he sat in the chair by Jack Crawford, the director of the movie made from his book, Cannibal. It was the fictional story of Dr. Hugh Mikkelsen, a psychiatrist who is secretly a serial killer and a cannibal who regularly feeds his friends the people he kills.

Cannibal was Will's first book, an instant hit, and when it had been optioned for a film he'd been overjoyed.

Now he wished he'd never signed the papers.

"And…CUT!"

The cameras all stopped, and Jack patted Will's shoulder as he looked over at him.

"What did you think, huh? Perfect, right? I knew Hannibal was our cannibal."

Will forced himself to smile. "Yeah, it…it was great."

The crew all started to scatter, and Will tried not to let his frustrations show on his face. He'd been asked to write the script for the movie, been paid handsomely for it, and yet seeing it now he knew they'd changed so much.

It was schlock, a mockery of his book, and despite knowing it would be a hit and he'd get even more money he couldn't help how upset he was seeing the changes made without his permission. He'd trusted his management, his publisher, when they said the studio loved his final draft.

They'd all lied.

He got up, blinking back tears, and headed for the nearest bathroom.

He wouldn't be coming back here again, not after this, and as he ran into the stall he sat down to put his head in his hands.

There was a loud bang as the door opened just as Will started to cry, and someone walked inside the men's room with their shoes tapping on the floor.

"Mister Graham?"

Lecter.

It was Hannibal Lecter.

They'd never met, not once, as Will couldn't find it in himself to talk to the star who so embodied Hugh's character from the moment he'd seen his audition.

Hannibal *was* Hugh Mikkelsen, his every mannerism perfect, but the horribly writing ruined it enough that Will couldn't face him.

"I…I'm in the bathroom, Mr. Lecter," he said, his voice shaking as he sniffled, "It's not really a good time."

"I've wanted to speak to you, I…"

"Please just…go away."

The silence that followed was almost too long, and Will felt his eyes well up again as he tried to calm himself. It was so silly to be so upset, and embarrassing to do it in front of Hannibal Lecter.

"I…I understand your upset."

Will froze, unsure of what to say.

"I've read 'Cannibal' and…I know the material I'm reading is *not* what you intended."

He let out a long breath. "It's…it's garbage," he growled, so angry he felt sick, "They *butchered* my book, my *script* , and I…I can't go back out there. I can't…I can't watch this happen."

"Will," Hannibal said, "Please, can…can I take you to lunch perhaps? Can I…show you my appreciation at the very least for creating Hugh Mikkelsen? Something? Anything?"

Will got up, opened the door, and looked at Hannibal with a watery smile.

"I'd like that."

Hannibal smiled, and put his hand on Will's shoulder.

"I'm glad to have made you smile at least once today."

As they walked out of the men's room Will was grateful for the quiet, and when Hannibal led him toward an expensive Bentley in the parking lot outside he was a bit intimidated but only blushed once as Hannibal opened the passenger side for him to get in.

Hannibal turned when he got behind the wheel and they locked eyes.

“Ready?”

“As I’ll ever be.”

They pulled out of the lot, and Will felt like he could finally breathe again when he didn’t see the studio logo in his rearview.

“So,” Hannibal began, not looking his way, “I…I’m certain you think me a bit hypocritical for being on your side in regards to the writing, and yet…still participating in this farce.”

Will frowned. “I…I get it,” he said, “It’s a job and…”

“It’s not that,” Hannibal interrupted, looking at him, “I…I confess I…I was hoping I’d get to meet you at last. You weren’t at my casting, though they said you’d seen a tape, and…I’ve admired you since I finished the book the first time.”

He blushed. “I…oh,” he said, looking away, “Thanks, I guess.”

“You’re a brilliant writer, Will,” Hannibal said, “And…you deserve all the accolades you’ve been given in the past year for ‘Cannibal’ I can hardly wait to see what you write next.”

Will laughed nervously. “After this, I’m not sure I’ll write anything.”

The car stopped abruptly in traffic, and Will looked up sharply as Hannibal grabbed his shoulder, eyes wild.

“BUT YOU MUST! YOU MUST NOT LET THIS GET YOU DOWN! THE WORLD NEEDS YOUR WORDS, WILL! They…” tears filled his eyes, “They need…they need your brilliance.”

Will could hardly breathe as he stared into Hannibal’s eyes.

“I…I don’t know how I can,” he said, his voice shaking, “Not if this movie is out in the world, not if…”

Hannibal’s lip curled. “I…I understand,” he said, as cars honked around them and his voice grew quiet when he pulled forward again, “I…I understand.”

The rest of the car ride was quiet after that, and when they got to the restaurant Will felt like he’d done something wrong. Hannibal was quiet, hardly speaking, and the whole ordeal made him feel that much worse. Will watched Hannibal exit the car when they got back to the studio, leaving him inside, and he got out with tears running down his face not bothering to go follow.

Will went home and drowned his sorrows in the bottle of expensive whiskey the studio had sent weeks before production, and woke up the next morning with a splitting headache. He grabbed his phone, saw it was dead, and sighed loudly plugging it in before he ate bland toast while letting the dogs out to play.

The sound of text messages began not ten minutes later, and Will was confused at how the dings didn’t stop. He got up, walked to his phone, and looked at his messages.

OH MY GOD WILL I CAN’T BELIEVE THIS HAPPENED!

ARE YOU OK?

THEY’RE LOOKING FOR SOMEONE TO TAKE OVER DON’T WORRY!

He was confused, and replied to his agent while he opened up the entertainment news.

DIRECTOR JACK CRAWFORD DEAD AT 55

Will froze.

“What?”

He looked at the article, heart beating wildly in his chest, and froze when he read the sentence that made his knees nearly buckle out from under him.

Director Jack Crawford, 55, was found brutally murdered in his Los Angeles home last night.

Will called his agent, tears stinging his eyes, and when Alana picked up she sounded rattled.

“Will, I don’t know what to say.”

Will let out a long breath. “How did it…”

“I’ve heard from…sources…that he was…eviscerated and…his eyes…they were filled with…”

Will closed his eyes.

“Flowers.”

“Yes,” she said, “Just…just like the book.”

He put his hand on his chest.

“Was there anything else? His wife, is she…”

“Bella is unharmed, she was asleep through the whole thing. They think she might’ve been drugged. Will, I hate to bring it up but this means production is on hold till they find someone. They’re looking, but…with the connection…”

Will couldn’t help but smile, and hated himself for it.

“I understand.”

“I’d tell you that this is just a coincidence but…it’s obviously not.”

Will fell back on his bed. “Yeah.”

“The studio won’t let this ruin production, at least not yet, but it’ll be a while.”

“I know.”

“Try to do something good today, alright? Try…”

“Alana,” Will said, “I…I wanted to…ask….why didn’t you tell me about the changes?”

She was quiet.

“I walked in there, thinking I’d see *my book* and *my script* come to life but it was so different. Why didn’t you tell me?”

“Will…”

Tears filled his eyes. “They had perfect casting, and they just butchered it. I guess,” he laughed, “Someone else agrees if they decided to butcher the director.”

“Will! You…that was uncalled for.”

He let out a long breath. “Sorry, I…I didn’t mean to…sound crass. I just…”

“Things happen in movies, Will,” she said, her voice thick, “Changes happen and…you need to just be happy you got the money and you’ll see Hugh Mikkelsen come to life. You can’t have it all, and…Jack didn’t deserve this.”

“I know, I…I’m sorry.”

“I have to go,” she said, “I have more calls to make. Just…don’t talk to the press yet. We’ll put together a statement.”

“Ok, Alana.”

“Goodbye, Will.”

“Bye.”

She ended the call, and Will couldn't help the smile that came over his face.

What would Hugh think about this?

He suddenly got a burst of inspiration, and stood walking to his computer. The words came out so fast it was like water, flowing from his fingers, and he was done with the third chapter by lunch.

Dr. Hugh Mikkelsen was going to Hollywood, it seemed.

The idea of using this situation for his next novel might be disrespectful but he wasn't gonna stop.

And the book could come out in a few years when the outrage quieted down.

He went to get something to eat, but stopped to let the dogs out, and froze when he saw a basket on his back porch.

Will walked up, and picked the card off the handle.

Will -

I apologize for my behavior yesterday, it was uncalled for. Please forgive my rudeness, and I only wish my gift can make you smile. Thank you for giving the world, and me, your beautiful book and I hope you are someday inspired once again.

Yours,

Hannibal Lecter.

The basket was filled with, to Will's surprise, treats for the dogs and a bottle of his favorite whiskey along with sweaters that looked almost handmade. He smiled, blushing, and saw Hannibal had left another note.

Will -

If this has made you smile please call me at 555-229-0101. I'd love to hear from you.

He frowned, wondering just how long this had been out here, and why Hannibal didn't mention Jack. Maybe he'd sent it through the delivery service yesterday? Will dialed the number, and whistled for the dogs to come up for treats.

"Will," Hannibal said, his voice almost a sigh, "I had hoped you would call."

"How did you know it was me?"

"No one else other than my agent has this number," he said, making Will blush, "I take it you liked my gifts?"

"Yes, I…thank you. After the news this morning I…"

"Yes," Hannibal sighed, "Poor Jack. I…he and I may not have seen Hugh Mikkelsen in the same light but he was a very good director. His poor wife is devastated. I sent her a basket as well. It can't do anything to bring him back, of course, but…"

"You're too kind," Will sighed, feeding the dogs more, "I…I was so upset on my ride home last night about my stupid book for the two hour drive and now I feel like such a…"

"Don't ever disregard your feelings about such a brilliant creation, Will."

“I just…”

“Your book is perfect,” Hannibal said, his voice sounding strained, “It’s…I’ve never read a more perfect text.”

“Thank you,” Will said, sniffling, “I…I’m glad you…you liked it so much and I…can I let you in on a secret?”

Hannibal paused. “A secret? Of course.”

“I started a sequel,” he said, feeling like a weight had been lifted off his shoulders, “I got inspired by…god I can’t believe I’m admitting this…I got inspired by Jack’s death to start it a few hours ago. I’m on chapter three.”

Hannibal gasped. “You…you’re writing again? That’s…that’s wonderful. I…thank you for telling me. I’m very happy to hear it.”

“I probably can’t publish it for a few years but…”

“It doesn’t matter,” Hannibal growled, “You’re writing again and that’s all that matters. I only hope you continue to get inspired. May I ask what the story contains? If you don’t wish to…”

He blushed. “Dr. Mikkelsen’s murders get turned into a movie and he’s so upset about how he’s portrayed that he…he kills the cast and the people involved one by one.”

Hannibal laughed. “That…that is quite the inspiration.”

Will smiled. “You don’t think I’m a monster?”

“A monster? No. Brilliant? Absolutely. I…I can hardly wait to see the book when it’s published and read about Hugh again.”

Will felt tears fill his eyes as he kept smiling. “I mean, you’re my biggest fan. I wouldn’t make you wait. If you want, after I’m done tonight you can come by and read what I have so far.”

Hannibal gasped. “You…you’re certain? I would never ask you for such a thing. It’s…”

“I’d love to show you,” Will said, feeling nervous, “I mean it might suck…”

“It won’t,” Hannibal said, “I…I will be there tonight. I’ll bring dinner, and…I’ll bring everything. Eight o’clock?”

“Yeah, that’s…that sounds great.”

“I’m sure tonight will be a night to remember.”

Will smiled. “I’m sure it will. Have a good day, Hannibal, or try to anyway.”

“After this conversation, Will, I’m not sure I could have anything but a good day. I wish you well on your writing.”

“Thanks, I…goodbye.”

“Goodbye.”

The call ended and Will laughed feeling oddly giddy then froze.

Did he have a crush on Hannibal Lecter?

“Oh god,” he sighed, “I…I have the worst timing.”

As if someone like *Hannibal Lecter* would ever even look at someone like him that way.

He covered his face as he tried not to panic.

It would be fine.

Hannibal was a fan of his writing, and he’d keep it casual.

Will picked up more treats as the dogs whined, and fed them a few more as he petted every single one of them on the head.

“At least someone loves me,” he said, “Right guys?”

The dogs didn’t answer, because obviously they were dogs, but he still felt like tonight might be a disaster.

Will got a text message and he looked down to see it was a picture sent from Hannibal.

It was a cake, already starting to be decorated and the black and red icing was perfect.

Already preparing for tonight. I hope you’re not allergic to red velvet?

He smiled.

Nope. How did you get that done so fast? Were you already having a party?

I make cakes often in case there's a need.

That's weird. I don't know anyone who makes emergency cakes.

As Hugh Mikkelsen would say, *"It's fine to be weird."*

Will smiled.

He really would.

He felt his heart skip a beat as Hannibal replied with a new picture, the cake decorated with words in perfect script.

A NIGHT TO DIE FOR

It was the same words Hugh Mikkelsen had carved into the body of one of his last kills in Cannibal, and though Will knew he should be a little creeped out he couldn't help but blush.

I can't wait.

Neither can I.

All thought of Jack Crawford's murder disappeared as he walked inside, still smiling, and headed for the computer forgetting about lunch.

And started to write again.

Day 4: Runaway

He was so cold.

The wind picked up as Will hid in the bushes, hitting his fur as he thought of what to do.

He had nowhere to go, nowhere at all, and if he ran any further they might find him again.

There was no way he'd let them give him to the alpha pack leader.

No fucking way.

He whimpered as the wind hit him hard, flowing over his open wounds, and he curled in tighter, his fur helping keep him warm enough but still he was shaking as he hoped whoever owned this house didn't come back. Will thought of breaking in, it had been days since anyone even came near, but he worried there were hidden cameras somewhere.

Who knew in this neighborhood?

He heard a rustling in the distance, lifted his head, and growled as obvious footsteps came closer to him.

The threat had no scent, none at all, and he tried to stand but fell still growling as they knelt near the bush to look at him.

He was older than Will, pale skinned, and it was obvious now why he had no scent.

“A baby wolf,” he said, smiling as he showed his fangs, “How curious. I can smell your blood from here baby wolf.”

Will growled louder, biting his hand, and the vampire didn’t stop as he ran his fingers over Will’s fur. It felt nice, he hadn’t been touched in days, and he whimpered as the wolf grabbed his entire snout, closing his teeth shut.

“Are you running, baby wolf?”

He shifted then, he couldn’t help it, and reared back still growling as the vampire’s eyes widened.

“Not so baby then,” he said, “But still young. Who hurt you, little wolf?”

Will could hardly see through his sudden tears. “I…I can’t…”

The vampire leaned in further, on all fours now, and Will was struck by the trust he’d been given. He could shift now, attack, and possibly even kill him. It had been days since he’d eaten, and the meat wouldn’t be the best but it would be enough. The vampire was showing him respect, and Will was so terrified he came closer only to have the vampire wrap his arms around him tight.

“Let me help you, little wolf.”

The words made him let out a sob, almost a howl if not for the vampire reaching out fast to cover his mouth.

“They’ll hear you if you howl, little wolf,” he said, “Let me help you inside.”

Will let himself be carried, losing all strength, and when the vampire opened the door he knew he lived here. It was warm inside, so warm, and Will started to shake harder as they

headed into the kitchen.

The vampire said nothing as he opened the freezer, took out something that had little smell, and put it into the microwave.

“I’m sure you’re quite hungry,” he said, still holding Will with ease, “Aren’t you, little wolf?”

Will whimpered as he nodded, still not moving to get away, and the sound of the microwave going off made him turn in time to see the vampire take out something that made him growl. He took the package, tore it open, and began to eat without care dripping blood down his face as he nearly howled with happiness. The steak was perfect, even if it had been frozen, and he looked up to see the vampire’s eyes were red as he smiled.

“There now,” he said, as Will kept eating, “Better?”

Will dropped the bone, face still wet with blood, and felt his lip quiver. “I…I don’t know why you’re being so nice to me.”

The vampire wiped the blood from his lips and licked his fingers one by one.

“Someone has hurt you,” he said, his voice almost a growl, “And you came to my vacation home for asylum. Why would I turn you away?”

He sniffled, licking the bone, and shook his head. “I…I’m not a vampire.”

The vampire smiled. “You would’ve died in those bushes if you were,” he said, taking the bone from Will to lick, the blood now dripping down his chin as Will watched, “I can’t… abide by them.”

“I…”

He took the bone and put it into a trashcan and smiled at Will as he licked his lips.

“What is your name, little wolf?”

“Will,” he said, his voice shaking.

“Hello, Will,” the vampire said, “My name is Hannibal. You can stay as long as you’d like. No one will come for you here.”

Will moved to escape his arms but was held firm, confused at why he wasn’t letting him go but too afraid to ask.

“Why wouldn’t…you’re just a vampire.”

Hannibal smiled. “Have you heard of a vampire born, Will?”

“I….those are only in fairy tales.”

“Yes, I suppose they are,” Hannibal said, walking them from the kitchen toward the stairs, “You were probably raised on fairy tales in your pack, told that vampires were lesser than and that…pack is law. Omegas were meant to be the alpha’s whore and alphas were…”

Tears stung his eyes.

“King.”

Hannibal sighed as they got to the top step, and set Will down before he put his hands on Will's face.

"Show me your eyes, little wolf."

Will was terrified as he closed his eyes, and opened them up to show Hannibal his yellow omega glow.

Hannibal touched his cheek. "As I suspected," he said, "You're omega."

"How do…"

"I know much, little wolf," he said, leaning in close to rub his cheek against Will's, scenting when he shouldn't even know the gesture.

Will whimpered, scenting back, and though at first he'd thought Hannibal had no scent just for a moment he almost could smell something under the surface.

Something *strong*.

"I will protect you, Will," he promised, lifting his head back to look into Will's eyes, "Trust in that."

"I…."

Hannibal stood up straight again, and put his hand on Will's shoulder leading him to the fanciest bathroom Will had ever seen. "You can clean off here," he said, "And…I will tend to your wounds after, though…they seem to be healing."

“I…thank you, Hannibal.”

“You’re welcome.”

Will watched him go, and turned on the water of the tub sitting on the edge as he smiled.

He knew it might be a mistake to trust a stranger, let alone a vampire, but for now he would.

What was the worst that could happen when he already lost everything?

Day 5: Pet Sitters

Will had a problem.

He had *another* teaching conference next week, his third in six months, and he had to be out of town for almost four days.

And all the pet sitters refused to take his pack.

Will knew it was his own fault, he may have been a little *strict* with a few sitters in the past and gotten angry at the slightest mistake, but this was his pack.

His family.

He wasn't gonna just let anyone take them.

Which was why he finally caved and went to PamperedPooch.com.

PamperedPooch.com was a very expensive pet sitting site where the creme de la creme of society found their pet sitters. The cheapest sitter was almost five hundred dollars a day, not even counting overnight, and as he made his account he made sure to be polite while he posted pictures of the pack.

Well trained pack of seven dogs very used to pet sitters.

May need overnights for four consecutive days.

Send message below.

He waited, chewing his lip, and after thirty minutes he went to let the dogs out thinking maybe he could make an excuse to his boss that he had to miss this one.

Not that Jack would be happy with him.

It wasn't his first.

Will ate lunch and came back to the computer where he found several messages asking for astronomical prices that he deleted immediately. Then he got to the last message and as he read the sitter's reply he smiled.

Hello Will

I am a very experienced pet sitter who has worked in the profession for nearly ten years. I can handmake all your pack's food - following my own or a provided recipe of your choice - and I will, if need be, take them to my home if I cannot stay at yours. I will need to be provided adequate ingredients ahead of schedule for their meals but will make my own. For four days I would charge one thousand dollars.

Please tell me if you'd like to meet in person or we can talk over the phone.

I look forward to your reply.

Hannibal Lecter

Will answered back fast, feeling so happy he could burst, and agreed to meet Hannibal later for coffee. He went to give the dogs treats, still smiling, and got himself together putting a nice shirt and some clean jeans before he headed out for the city.

He got there early, the shop a little pricey but not overly, and looked around waiting for Hannibal to arrive.

And froze as a man in an Armani suit started to walk towards him. He blushed, looking the man over with way too obvious interest.

It couldn't be.

The man paused in front of Will and pulled out the dog bone they'd agreed upon to show who they were.

"Hannibal?"

Hannibal Lecter smiled and held out his hand.

"Hello, Will."

Will blushed as he took the man's hand, and found himself almost uncomfortable with how good looking he was. He never would've guessed this man was a pet sitter. A doctor maybe? A model? Not a pet sitter.

"So…I…"

"What is it you do, Will?"

He blinked. "What? I…I don't know why that matters."

Hannibal leaned forward and smiled. "I'm merely curious. You're not my usual clientele."

Will blushed. "I'm a Biology teacher."

“Ah,” Hannibal said, as a woman came over, “A man after my own heart. I will have a Americano, three sugars please. Will?”

Will looked at her. “Um, a black coffee four sugars.”

She smiled, and Will was surprised to see her unusual name.

Mischa.

“Coming right up,” she said, winking at Hannibal who just smiled back.

Will frowned. “She…”

“That is my sister,” Hannibal said with a sigh, “She’s much younger than me and likes to… observe my meetings.”

Will smiled. “That’s…kinda cute.”

“Is it? One would think the older sibling would be the more protective. Mischa is barely out of her twenties and treats my job like every client may be a secret serial killer.”

He laughed. “You never know.”

Hannibal smiled. “No, I suppose you don’t,” he said, looking at Will oddly, “So…ask me anything, Mr. Graham. I’m all yours for the next several hours. What do you need to think of me as a potential pet sitter?”

Will blushed again. “I…I just…I’m a little picky, that’s all. I’ve ran myself off of so many sites and I…”

“You love your dogs, Will, that’s not a bad thing. What scared all of them away?”

He sighed. “I want everything perfect, that’s all.”

Mischa returned and put the cups down in front of them, eyeing Will the same odd way Hannibal did. “Anything else, guys?”

“Just privacy.”

She laughed. “Yeah, not gonna happen. I’ll be…over there.”

Will watched her go, her blonde hair so different from Hannibal’s and, he smiled at him.

“So…you’ll do anything I ask of you then? Anything at all?”

“Yes. Perhaps, I can come to your home and meet the pack to see how they like me. Would that ease your worries?”

Will frowned. “I…I guess so.”

“Wonderful,” Hannibal said, pulling out his phone, “Give me your address and we can set this all up as soon as possible. I….I really am looking forward to meeting them and…working for you, Will.”

Will wiggled in his seat.

This was a bad idea.

Very, very bad.

But he took Hannibal's phone and gave him his info, feeling Hannibal's eyes on him the whole time before he handed it back.

"I think maybe you might be my ideal dog sitter," he said, laughing nervously, "It's like you were made for me."

Hannibal smiled as he sipped his drink.

"You seem like the ideal client," he said, "Perhaps…we were made for each other."

Will blushed again.

"Maybe."

Day 6: Domestic

Will didn't mean to become a topless maid.

Or at least, not at first.

He'd had to quit working for the FBI when his mental health began to deteriorate, and despite his teaching degree one look into his many public breakdowns made every interview end horribly.

Will was barely scraping by, especially trying to feed himself and seven dogs, when he stumbled upon the world of house cleaning. It wasn't something he'd ever thought to do as a full time job, but cleaning had always been a comfort when he needed to get away from things that upset him. He enjoyed cleaning, the smells mixed with the sight of a job well done was enough to make him take his first job.

Which resulted in another.

And another.

Then he was sitting at a coffee shop with someone he'd met who cleaned also, a woman named Beverly Katz who quickly got him filled in on the things he was doing wrong. Mainly cleaning supplies and charging way too little.

He didn't have many friends - most people didn't want to hang out with the guy who had at one point regularly threatened to murder people - and Bev turned into a great one fast after a few months.

She was the one who told him about topless cleaning.

Will froze with his coffee to his mouth as they sat outside his house. “What?”

“I mean, I only do a few right now but it pays WAY more than regular stuff and…”

Will frowned. “Bev, NO,” he said, “You..that’s got to be dangerous.”

“I take a bodyguard, Will, I’m not an idiot. My boyfriend Brian sits outside. He’s not huge or anything, but it intimidates enough people knowing I’ve got someone.”

Will shook his head. “I could never do that.”

“No?” she asked, “I mean…you’re adorable, you’d get tons of takers I bet. You’d be surprised.”

Will blushed. “I’m not adorable.”

“Yes, you are,” she said, grinning as she leaned in to kiss his cheek, “Think about it.”

And so Will thought.

And thought some more.

But before he could really consider the idea, he got his biggest client yet. Dr. Hannibal Lecter lived in a very posh neighborhood, one of the nicest Will had ever seen, and asked for an entire clean of his home top to bottom when he saw Will’s profile.

He offered nearly two grand for the job, which was double what Will normally charged for more work than that.

So he took the job without even looking Dr. Lecter up, and the very next day pulled up to the nicest house he'd ever seen. He got out his supplies just as Hannibal came out, and he froze blushing as a man in an Armani suit took his supplies from him with a smile.

"Hello Will," he said, "You're early."

"I…I don't like to be late."

"A man after my own heart," he said, "Come inside, please."

Will followed him, feeling oddly nervous, and when he stepped inside he looked around in shock at the house he was going to clean. There didn't seem to be a speck of dirt *anywhere* and as Hannibal led him towards the kitchen he still didn't see anything.

"...and I will be in my study."

He blinked. "You're gonna stay?"

Hannibal frowned. "Is that not commonplace? I'm afraid I've never hired a house cleaner before."

Will shook his head. "I mean, not usually, but…you can stay. I was just surprised."

Hannibal smiled. "Excellent," he said, "Well…I won't keep you."

He watched Hannibal go, and went to fill his bucket but again wondered just what he was supposed to clean in an already spotless house? Did Dr. Lecter just get off on having him here? Was that it?

Will started with the kitchen, the countertops, sink, stove, and even the fridge which was where he found Dr. Lecter was something of a cook given his countless labeled containers inside.

He was nearly finished with the fridge when the door bumped into him, sending one of the glass containers to the floor where Will attempted to catch it just in time to get splattered red sauce all over his shirt.

“SHIT!”

The loud shattering or his yelling didn’t get Dr. Lecter’s attention it seemed, thank god, and he cleaned up as best he could, taking off his shirt in an attempt to get the eventual stain out fast.

Which was when Dr. Lecter walked into the kitchen.

“Will?”

He froze.

“Um, this isn’t what it looks like.”

Dr. Lecter smiled. “It looks as if you dropped one of my glass containers from the refrigerator and it stained your white shirt.”

“Then I guess it is what it looks like,” Will mumbled, blushing so hard he thought he might explode, “I…I can put it back on….”

“No need,” Hannibal said, smiling, “Please, let me clean that for you.”

Will handed over his shirt. “I…thanks.”

“You’re welcome.”

He left him alone, and Will felt oddly exposed but he finally just continued to clean. It wasn’t like Dr. Lecter hadn’t seen a man’s chest before, and really it wouldn’t be for long.

“It will be about an hour, give or take,” Dr. Lecter said as he came back, “But…if you’re uncomfortable you can come another time.”

“I mean…I’m not…I just…I’m sure you don’t want a shirtless guy walking around your house cleaning even if it’s just for an hour.”

He looked Will up and down. “I wouldn’t mind.”

Will blushed.

Oh.

“I guess I…”

“Would it be crass of me to ask if you could…remain…this way? I would pay you more.”

“Sure, I guess,” he said, barely able to look him in the eye, “How much more?”

“Five hundred?”

Will's eyes widened. "I…yes. I mean, yeah I'll stay like this."

Dr. Lecter smiled. "Excellent," he said, "May I…observe a bit closer then?"

"I guess you need to get your money's worth," Will mumbled, his face so red he knew he had to look ridiculous.

He sat at the kitchen table then, and watched Will clean the rest of the kitchen. His gaze had Will hard as hell by the time everything in the kitchen was finished, and with every room he went to it only got worse. Will knew that even if Dr. Lecter was flirting; he'd never be stupid enough to give into temptation to do more.

Men like him didn't have use for men like Will as more than one night stands.

He finished feeling oddly more accomplished for the job done, and was given his shirt as almost a trophy.

"I will hire you again, Will," he said, "If you're willing to…clean as you did for me today."

"Sure," he said, not meeting his eyes, "Call me anytime."

And so he did.

Will went to Dr. Lecter's every Monday for the next three weeks, often doing manual tasks like mowing the lawn or just cleaning the bathroom shirtless. He got an extra bonus for each job, and soon took less clients in general because he was making so much with just the one.

They started to talk while Will cleaned, often just small talk, but Will grew a lot more comfortable having his shirt off enough that he sometimes threw it to the floor before he even

made it inside.

Dr. Lecter, or Hannibal as he had Will call him now, was surprisingly funny and he was nice.

It had been a long time since Will met someone just nice.

His third week he gave Will a gift for his dogs, homemade dog biscuits in the shape of hearts, and Will couldn't stop smiling when he left almost late for seeing Bev who he avoided since this all began.

He walked into the coffee shop still smiling, and barely noticed Bev was already waiting at the table until she spoke.

"OK WHO IS SHE?"

Will froze, realizing it as Bev yelling at him, and rushed to sit down.

"Why are you yelling?" he mumbled, blushing, "Everyone is staring at us."

"I'm yelling because you've dodged my calls for almost a month and now you come in here on a damn Monday smiling like a smitten kitten so…who is she?"

Will shook his head. "There's no one," he mumbled, ready to get up again for a coffee, "I'm not…"

She grabbed his hand. "Will, you have to be dating someone. I can see how goofy eyed you look. I've never…wait," her smile faded, "Oh god is it a crush? Do you have a crush?"

Will turned bright red and ran from the table, thinking about just leaving all together. He realized as he waited that he *did* have a crush.

And it was the worst person it could be.

Hannibal was so out of his league he might as well be in fucking Mars.

“William Graham,” Bev growled, grabbing his arm suddenly, “You are not running from me.”

He glared at her. “First my name isn’t *William,* it’s *Will;* and second…I’m not running I’m getting coffee. We’re at a coffee shop, Bev. I…”

“Can I help you, Sir?”

Will walked up, got his black coffee, and Bev stayed almost glued to his side as they sat down again.

“Ok, so….?”

He sighed.

“I might…have a little…crush on someone. It’s…it’s nothing.”

“Will…”

“It’s nothing, Bev,” he said, bright red, “I just…I have a new client and he’s really nice and he’s handsome and…um…”

“Um, what?”

Will covered his face with his hands. “I…I might be…um…cleaning for him shirtless for extra money.”

Bev was dead silent, so quiet he had to look up to be sure she was still there, and her eyes were wide.

“Are you shitting me right now?”

“Um, no?”

She grabbed his arm. “You,” she hissed, squeezing, “The man who just weeks ago told me it was dangerous is now a topless maid for a nice, handsome…is he rich, Will?”

He looked down. “Maybe.”

“Will,” she sighed, “Sweetie, it’s not a crush you have, ok? This man wants you and you’re clueless.”

Will blinked. “No, he’s just flirting, it’s not…”

“Will, c’mon. Every person I clean topless for looks at me like I’m hot. It can be creepy with some, and yeah I stop going to them but there are times…I mean I’ve done it with Brian. It was pretty hot.”

“Bev,” he groaned, “Stop, c’mon it’s…”

She took his hand. “Honey, look me in the eye and tell me how he looks at you when you clean for him.”

Will blushed even worse. “He…he looks…like he wants to..um…he…he might…”

“Will, do you *want* the hot rich man to do the things he looks at you like he wants to do?”

“I…yes,” he whispered, “I…yeah I…I think so.”

“So the next time he calls you, go over there with your shirt on and ask him out. Ok?”

Will let out a long breath. “Ok.”

“See? That wasn’t so bad, right?” she asked, grinning, “But if you do it for someone else next time be sure to bring a knife or something. You never know what kind of crazy you’ll run into. Hell, I can send Brian over?”

“No, Bev…it’s…it’s fine.”

She patted his hand. “Ok then,” she said, “But I want you to tell me *everything*. I mean it. I want every detail.”

Will smiled. “Ok.”

They finished coffee, and he promised not to ignore her again, heading home to give the dogs their treat from Hannibal. He got a text just before bed with a picture of a cookie sheet with something shaped like bones on it.

Would your canines be up for another gift?

Totally. They ate all the ones you gave me today.

I will be prepared for next Monday. =)

Will smiled, biting his lip, and thought of doing it now.

It would be easy, just a quick question.

Wanna go out sometime?

He stared at the last text for what felt like forever and finally put his phone away with a sigh falling asleep fast.

And woke up to another message.

What is your schedule like this week, Will? I may need your services for a quick clean of my dining room. There was an incident that could not be avoided.

Will frowned as he smiled, sitting up in bed.

Could not be avoided? Sounds serious. I'm pretty free today, actually. What time do you want me?

As soon as possible.

I can be there in an hour.

I'll be waiting.

He quickly got dressed, taking his time to be sure he looked nice enough and headed out after he made sure the dogs were fed and did their business. Traffic was a bit of a nightmare, and he ended up having to text Hannibal to move things later.

I'm sorry but can we move it another hour? Traffic is terrible.

Of course.

Will got to Hannibal's by ten, pulled up, and nearly ran to the door to let himself inside. He frowned when he wasn't greeted in the foyer, and took off his shoes, shirt already half unbuttoned before he paused.

"Hannibal?"

There was no answer, but as he walked toward the kitchen he found a box sitting on the table with his name on it.

He blinked, looked around, and called out again.

"Hannibal?"

Will got no reply and he opened the box to find a pair of black silk shorts inside.

And a note.

Wear this for me today?

He frowned, feeling oddly upset, and stared at the shorts for far too long before he heard Hannibal's voice.

"You're under no obligation to wear them," Hannibal said, coming out of nowhere, "I…I saw them a few days ago and have been…holding onto them. I confess I…I may have…dirtied the dining room on purpose to ask you to come today."

Will forced himself to smile as he picked them up. "No, it's fine i just…I mean…at least you didn't ask me to be naked right?" he laughed, and it sounded strained even to him.

Hannibal frowned. "Will, is there something wrong?"

"Nope," he lied, "Just let me get changed."

Will nearly ran from the kitchen to the nearest bathroom, locked the door, and sat on the toilet.

So much for his big moment.

Hannibal obviously only wanted him as eye candy.

Tears stung his eyes as he got undressed, and he slipped on the silk short before he opened the door to find Hannibal on the other side.

"Tell me what's wrong, Will."

"It's nothing," he said, "Just let me by, I need to get my supplies."

Hannibal grabbed his arm. “No.”

Will glared at him. “This is harassment, *Doctor Lecter,”* he said, “If you don’t let me by I’ll call the fucking cops.”

Hannibal let go, and Will went to get his supplies. He headed into the dining room where there was fallen food everywhere and got to cleaning.

Hannibal never came in once.

Not once.

Will was in tears again when he finished, and he found an envelope in the open box he’d left on the table. He opened the envelope and saw ten one hundred dollar bills.

He left them there, got dressed, but for some reason kept the shorts on under his clothes.

Will got into his car, tears streaming down his cheeks, and pulled out fast driving nearly six blocks before he pulled over to call Bev.

“He didn’t want me,” he whispered, “He…he doesn’t…”

“Oh Will, fuck….where are you?”

“I’m going home,” he sniffled, “And I’m not coming back to him. Fuck him.”

“Will…”

He ended the call, so upset he couldn’t stop his tears, and tried not to think about Hannibal’s face when he’d been blocking him in the doorway.

It was nothing.

This whole damn thing had been for a rich asshole to ogle a poor one.

He was done.

Totally done.

Day 7: Boarding School

Someone was leaving cookies in Will's rooms and it was starting to get out of hand.

The groundskeeper's quarters were supposed to be off limits, according to what he'd been told when he was hired nearly two years ago, and despite how quickly he'd been accepted by the students he still felt like an outsider with the rest of the staff. He was *lesser than* in their eyes and he knew it, their obvious glares as he passed making him feel uncomfortable as he ran the mower or even trimmed hedges.

It wasn't like he talked to them much, or even at all, but all the teachers seemed to think he wasn't welcome.

Well, at least, everyone but Dr. Lecter.

Dr. Lecter always had a smile for Will every time he saw him, often complimented his work even, and once or twice would offer tips he'd seen online that helped Will out greatly. His time at Wolf Trap Hall would've been hell without him, truth be told, and Will considered the Psychology professor maybe not a friend but *friendly.*

Will frowned as he picked up the wrapped cookie in his hands and read the note attached to the sweet treat.

Just the sight of you gives my very essence nourishment.

He blushed, opening the cookie, and took a bite. The sweet chocolate hit his tongue and he moaned at the taste.

It was amazing, like the first five had been, and though he'd enjoyed the last five days he felt tears come to his eyes.

What if this was some sort of prank?

The kids were no doubt getting antsy, nearing the end of the year, and soon they'd be home for the summer like everyone else. Will stayed here all year round, caretaker as well as groundskeeper even in the off months, but the thought of this being some sort of joke made him want to throw up.

He coughed and threw the cookie down onto his bed, and folded the note to put it with the others in his bedside drawer.

Will sighed as he closed it, and put the cookie back in its mylar bag that he tied before he headed outside.

The sun was getting hotter, and he undid his uniform just a little as sweat dripped down his neck.

He sighed, taking out his handkerchief, and was about to head for the shed when a familiar voice made him freeze.

“Do they not ask the *help* to shower?”

Freddie Lounds, who ran the school paper, stood smirking at him along with Frederick Chilton who taught English. The two of them laughed behind their hands as Will blushed, and closed up his shirt when they walked by.

“Do they not ask the newspaper to be well written and not horrid drivel?”

Will looked up to see Dr. Lecter glaring at the two other teachers, who both looked at a loss of what to say mumbling under their breath as they took off. He closed up his uniform, still feeling his stomach clench, and heard Dr. Lecter sigh.

“I apologize for that horridness, Will.”

He smiled, but didn’t look up. “I’m used to it by now.”

“You shouldn’t have to be. Your contributions to the school are just as worthy as theirs and should be seen just as highly…”

Will shook his head as he looked up again. “It’s fine, Dr. Lecter,” he said, blushing still, “Honestly, thank you but I can fight my own battles.”

Dr. Lecter looked down, blushing slightly. “I…yes I can see that.”

Will looked where he was and saw he’d buttoned his uniform up wrong, still exposing his chest.

“Oh sorry, I…”

“No apologizes needed,” Dr. Lecter said, “I…I’ll be on my way. Have a good day, Will.”

“I…thanks.”

Will watched him go, admiring the cut of his suit, and wondered how he didn’t melt in this heat while still looking so good. He blinked, turning away, and shook his head.

“Nope.”

He was *not* about to go there.

The year was almost over, and he'd kept his record clean so far. There would be no good to come from even getting a crush on one of the teachers, especially one so far out of his league. He headed back to work, and told himself he wouldn't think of Dr. Lecter again.

But as he walked by Dr. Lecter's classroom window he spotted him eating his perfectly made meal, and found himself staring openly at the other man. He looked *perfect,* like he wasn't real sometimes, and Will sighed.

Shit.

He was in trouble, wasn't he?

But he could get over this.

The last five days might not be a prank.

Maybe somewhere, someone was admiring him from afar.

Will smiled to himself as he got back to work.

Yeah.

Maybe someone did like him.

Too bad it couldn't be Dr. Lecter.

There was no way someone like him would even *look* Will's way.

Will sighed and took another peek at Dr. Lecter.

But he could look, couldn’t he?

Day 8: Robots & Androids

The first time Hannibal saw W.I.L.L. was as he drove home from his final appointment of the day. Things hadn't gone very well at all, a first visit that he knew would be their last, and as he turned his Bentley he realized he was on the wrong street.

And was blindsided by the most beautiful robot he'd ever seen in his entire life.

He stopped his car abruptly, struck at the sight of the robot walking four canines down a very well cared for sidewalk, and the obvious tell of a robot - their dead eyed stare focused on whatever prime directive they were given - turned expressive when he saw Hannibal stopped mid-street. The dogs barked wildly as the robot and Hannibal locked eyes, and when the robot looked away oddly bashful his heart skipped a beat unable to stop watching until he got too far away to view.

Hannibal immediately went to the electronics store and looked through the vast aisles of robots but found none that looked like the enchanting creature he'd seen.

Somehow, in all of the manufactured overconsumption, this robot was one of a kind.

So, of course, he decided to stalk him.

It wasn't very hard, really, to find him again.

This robot seemed to be a task taker of sorts, going house to house, and wasn't owned by anyone. Most robots were privately owned, far too expensive to be let out in the wild, but this one did not seem to be. Hannibal noticed after his fourth watch that the robot was able to expertly blend into society at times, his expressive gaze almost human, and it made him even more intriguing.

Who had let this fascinating creature get away from them?

He spent far too long in his pursuit, canceling appointments often just to catch a glimpse, that when he finally was given a boon of information it was like a treasure he'd hunted in the wild.

The robot's name was Will.

Or rather, that was what he called himself.

Hannibal caught the name as he sat outside one of the robot's many jobs when he was given his payment for walking yet another canine. The man in question, a rather stout sour fellow who treated Will a bit harshly named Paul Atkins, grabbed Will's arm as he turned to walk away.

"Hey, Will, I'm not done talking to you!"

His lip curled as he saw Will's anger, the brief moment so fast even the most astute person would've missed it, and as he was berated for nearly five whole minutes Will just smiled and nodded saying, "Thank you for your input, Sir," before he was on his way.

Hannibal watched Will go, leaving in his nondescript vehicle, and though he had yet to follow Will home he almost wanted to after that display. He would give Will the most expensive oil, electricity galore, and perhaps even make him a meal. It was very hard to think of what he could do with oil, or if Will took gas intake a mix of both, but he would try.

For Will he would try.

His anger got the best of him instead, and he stalked the man who'd been so rude to Will for the rest of the night before heading into his home to murder him brutally.

Which was how Hannibal was able to find out how he'd hired Will.

It seemed Will had distributed cards all around the city, even in mailboxes, and his phone number was on said cards.

The tagline he'd used was - ANYTHING YOU CAN DO I CAN DO BETTER - CALL NOW!

Hannibal made certain to get Will's information before he stuffed the card into Mr. Paul Atkins' open chest wound.

"Thank you for your help."

He left a message on Will's automated line that very next morning and made an appointment for that afternoon to have Will "weed his yard." Hannibal had no weeds, obviously, and planned on asking Will to be his live-in robot.

What could he possibly say but yes?

Day 9: Cleaning Crew

The first time Will meets Dr. Lecter it's entirely by accident.

He's mid-clean of his office, just like he does every night for the offices he's assigned in the complex along with the other four members of the By Design cleaning crew. Will's been the one to clean Dr. Lecter's office for the last two months, taking over for Leon Smuthers who just up and quit without even a phone call, and it's been one of the easiest cleans he's had in less than a year with By Design. Dr. Lecter keeps his office so clean that sometimes Will stops to take a break there, relaxing in the comfortable chairs the best he's ever sat on, and it's during one of those secret breaks that Dr. Lecter finds him.

Will stands up fast, eyes wide, and he grabs his fallen vacuum as his face turns bright red.

"Um, sorry, sorry, I was just—"

Dr. Lecter smiles, shaking his head. "There's no need to apologize, Mister…."

"I…I'm not sure I should say," he says, laughing nervously, "If you have my name then you can go to my boss and…"

"Yes, I suppose that's true," he says, walking across the room to open the drawer in his desk, getting out a folder that he holds close to his chest, "If I promised *not* to go to your employer?"

Will smiles. "I wouldn't believe you."

"Yes, that's probably wise," Dr. Lecter says, his smile widening, "Though I would not go to your employer. I understand that there's always need for a break and…I keep my office rather clean. I'm glad I can be the one to give it to you."

He sighs. “Well,” he sighs, “Now you’re just making me feel bad because that was…really nice.”

“I apologize for my manners,” Dr. Lecter says, walking across the office as he stops at the door, “I will promise not to be so considerate in the future, Mister…”

Will laughs. “I’m still not saying.”

Dr. Lecter nods, still smiling. “It was worth a try I suppose. Have a…lovely break, Mister Cleaner.”

“Thank you. Goodnight, Dr. Lecter.”

“Goodnight.”

Will is almost upset to see him go, admiring the office he’s felt so comfortable in for months now, and when it’s finally time to go he’s nearly at the door before he rushes over to the desk. Dr. Lecter has a pad of paper near his calendar that he’s always wondered at the use for, and as he opens the drawer to grab a pen he gives it one.

My name starts with a W.

That’s all I’ll say for now.

He’s blushing as he sticks it into the desk drawer, rethinking a dozen times about throwing it away, and finally locks up to go to his car.

What was he doing?

And why did he hope to get a response?

Day 10: Exiled

“Did you hear about the Prince?”

Will paused as he tied up his horse, feigning business, and watched as two noblemen spoke in hushed whispers.

“Oh yes,” the older of the two said, “I don’t believe it. A curse? It’s likely he’s dead, just like they say. The King and Queen would never exile the heir, not when the babe is so young. He’s gone and they won’t say for fear of retribution.”

He frowned as he headed into the market, ready with his wares, and thought about what the men had spoken of.

Was the Prince really dead and gone?

The last of the Lecter line, Hannibal was to be the heir come his twentieth nameday, and his Uncle and Aunt had taken over duties for nearly a decade now. They’d raised him as their own, cared for him, and Will could hardly imagine such loving people exiling their nephew.

It must be true then.

Hannibal was gone.

Will’s chest ached as he set up his table, tears stinging his eyes, as he suddenly remembered the one and only time he’d seen the Prince. It was the last time the true King and Queen were in public, celebrating Mischa’s seventh nameday, and the crowd had thrown flowers to them as they walked through the kingdom. Will had been only eleven then, just near his eighteenth nameday now, and the Prince had looked so handsome on his black horse, Lucifer, said to be so terrifying no one could ride him.

He hardly noticed when he sold much at all the next few hours, lost in his sudden grief, and as he rode home even his horse Winston noticed his worries.

“Sorry, Friend,” he sighed, “I…I’m not myself.”

Will was thankful he lived alone, not having to explain his absentmindedness to anyone, and the few coins he’d made were hardly enough to get him supper let alone food for the week. He was lucky he had cows in his small stable, and hens to lay eggs. Both would be enough for now.

He was nearly home when he heard the howl, a mournful terrifying sound, and Winston’s worries had him struggle to keep the cart from falling.

“Winston, calm down!”

The howls got more frequent, louder, and he kicked Winston's flank rushing forward in hopes he got home to beat the wolf at their back. He had tears streaming down his face when he saw it, the shadow so large it felt like a nightmare, and when Winston fell so did Will tumbling to the grass.

He rushed to find his knife, nearly sobbing, and was shaking when he grabbed the oil for his lantern as Winston made fearful noises in the dark.

"I WON'T LET HIM GET US! I WON'T! YOU WILL NOT WIN YOU MONSTER!"

The howls softened, almost stopped, and Will lit the lantern just as a terrifying creature came into view.

It was not a wolf.

It was….not a wolf at all.

The creature looked to be seven, no TEN feet tall, its red eyes glowing still under his lantern light, and as Will wielded his knife he felt faint at the sight of it.

"M…monster."

The creature seemed to almost recoil at his voice, slumping forward, and to Will's shock it fell to the grass. He wiped his cheeks, confused, and did something foolish.

He walked up to poke the monster, but found it unmoving, and with difficulty turned it onto its back.

And saw the bloody wound in its belly.

"G…good," he said, moving away, "You…you should not be, this…this is better for you."

Will rushed to help Winston up, but found he could not, and in tears cut his poor horse loose as he left him there to be meat for the beast. He pulled his small cart the short way home and cried himself to sleep.

But was woken in the morning to Winston's neighing right by his window.

He rushed outside, shocked, and saw that somehow Winston had come home to him. Will laughed as tears fell down his cheeks, and fed his poor horse before he headed to find the morning milk and eggs.

But found half his eggs gone, and strangely enough a note in the wake of the theft.

The words were hardly readable, and yet he read them still as the claw marks were obviously from one creature alone.

NEED FOOD
PAID
APOLOGIES

And to his shock he found a coin purse stuffed under one of the chickens that was more than generous.

Had the monster done this?

Why had the monster done this?

And…how did it have so much coin to pay him back?

He brought in what he could, confused and a little frightened but happy.

He smiled.

Perhaps there was more to the monster after all.

Day 11: Doppleganger

“Can you tell me how it happened?”

Will blinks back tears as the light hits his eyes. “I…I couldn’t let him kill me.”

“Mister Graham…”

He holds the knife in his hand tighter. “Are…are there more now?”

The pause he gets is the only answer he needs.

“We just want to know why you were spared,” the voice says, the coldness of the monotone voice making him wince, “When no one else at the school was.”

He shakes his head. “Because I couldn’t let him kill me.”

“You’re twenty three years old,” another voice says, sounding angry despite the monotone filter they’re speaking through, “You didn’t even get to graduate and you’re telling me you stopped a fucking monster because you didn’t want to die?”

Will wipes the tears that fall down his cheeks. “Yes.”

“Look here, you…”

A door opens at his left and he freezes when he sees who walks in unable to move.

“No, no, no, no, no…”

The man in question sits beside him, touching his face, and Will can’t stop the tears that keep coming.

“You remember me.”

“Please,” he whimpers, “I…I couldn’t let him kill me.”

“I couldn’t let him kill you either,” he says, “But he did, many many times.”

Will shakes his head. “Hannibal…”

Hannibal pulls him in for a hug and he fights to get away but can’t sobbing into Hannibal’s neck. He smells the same, just as before, and Will closes his eyes because he hopes he’s dreaming.

“Hundreds of students were killed in that school today.”

“I…I know.”

“And many more people all over the world.”

“Why…”

He pulls back and touches Will’s cheek. “But he didn’t kill you. Just you.”

Will shakes his head. “I…I couldn’t let him kill me.”

“Them, you mean,” Hannibal says, “You mean them.”

He lets out a long breath. “Yes.”

“You know what I am capable of, Will,” he says, still touching him, “And…what I have lost.”

“I…I dreamed about you.”

Hannibal smiles. “And about them.”

Will can hardly see through his tears. “Yes.”

Hannibal holds out his hand and Will takes it as they walk to the wall that he touches bringing to life with a bio-screen. The window to the world reveals a terror Will had hoped might not happen, but he can see it in real time.

“So many.”

“Yes, I…I miscalculated.”

There are hundreds, no thousands of the same man terrorizing the world all at the same time and killing everyone in their wake.

Hannibal Lecter - all of them are Hannibal Lecter.

“I lost you,” he says, his voice shaking, “I didn’t…I didn’t mean to do this.”

“And yet they’re letting you live.”

“Yes, because I…I said I would attempt to fix the mess I’ve made.”

Will looks at him. “How?”

Hannibal smiles sadly and squeezes his hand. “I have no idea,” he says, “But…I am glad if this is my ending I…I got to see your face one last time.”

Will looks out at the world in chaos and sighs. “What do you want me to do?”

“Just…be yourself.”

He laughs. “And then what?”

“I suppose we’ll cross that bridge over a sea of murderous doppelgängers. Are you…will you join me?”

Will looks at him. “Do I have a choice?”

“No,” Hannibal says, “But the illusion of choice is kinder than forcing you. Is it not?”

He smiles. “I guess it is,” he sighs, “I…I’ll join you and hope that my face can…keep the monsters happy.”

Hannibal sighs. “I know the monster in front of you is…very happy to see your face.”

He lets go of Hannibal's hand, blushing still, and when Hannibal stops the bio-screen he presses his forehead to it, closing his eyes.

"I'm not him," he says, "Ok?"

"Yes, I know."

Will looks at him. "I'll kill you if I have to."

Hannibal smiles. "I would expect nothing less."

Will smiles. "Then, let's go."

Day 12: Book Store

“Are you gonna visit your boyfriend today?”

Will blushed as he finished stocking the shelves properly, frowning as he made sure the figurines all were forward facing.

“I don’t have a boyfriend, Bev.”

Bev laughed. “Will…”

He glared at her. “I *don’t* have a boyfriend.”

She shook her head. “Well, I think he’ll be pretty sad if you don’t go visit. I mean…all those other girls that come there every single day asking stupid questions about books just to hear his accent are annoying as fuck and you with your cute little curls and band t-shirts make him smile. I heard from Margot he sometimes waits in the front looking for you.”

Will blushed and didn’t say anything as he moved to another table away from her.

How had it gotten this far?

He’d only worked at the Cooler Than You store for less than a month now, having picked up a second job just to help offset the bills once he quit teaching. It didn’t pay much, minimum wage really, but with this and his tattoo hours he was doing ok. Though he still got a little nervous when he did the tattoos, Jack was nice enough to coach him through it and he had a few clients that asked for him now after a year.

But while the Cooler Than You store was an ok job and he liked his coworkers the biggest thing that happened working in the mall was the bookstore just three stores down.

The Bookery.

It was almost like walking into a dream when you stepped inside, even with the open concept, and the pretentious expensive feel made it hard to even touch anything. But strangely enough it had everything most bookstores had: romance novels, spy thrillers, horror, and even things like comics and manga.

But it also had its owner.

Hannibal Lecter.

Hannibal who wore a three piece suit every single day, and looked like a million dollars. He did not fit in the mall atmosphere *at all* and despite everything Will found himself developing a huge crush on him because he was so nice.

Like *too nice.*

He'd even given Will a free copy of Dante's Inferno when he said he'd never read it, and kept pressing him on if he'd started it yet every time he even walked by but that soon turned into just talking. Hannibal was so easy to talk to, and Will's face hurt sometimes when he left because he smiled so much.

This job was both the worst and best thing to ever happen to him because while Hannibal was super nice, Will knew he was just that - nice - and so out of Will's league it was laughable. That didn't stop Will from going over there, nor did it stop him from being irrationally jealous when the teenagers went there to swoon over Hannibal like he was Harry fucking Styles. He was over thirty for fuck's sake, and while Will was too he still felt so nervous to be around him.

Why did he have to get a crush on him at all?

“Will…I’m sorry.”

Will looked up and sighed. “It’s fine, Bev.”

“No, I…I know we’re both adults and…I know you’re not exactly super chill when it comes to like dating and stuff. I shouldn’t have teased you.”

He blushed as he frowned folding the Hello Kitty socks.

“I date.”

“When? You’ve worked here for a while, and I’ve never heard you even mention dating anyone.”

He sighed. “I…I just…I don’t have second dates.”

“That’s called one night stands.”

Will laughed as he looked up at her. “You got me.”

Bev smiled. “But…I know you’re gonna get mad when I say this…I just want you to know that Hannibal like *really* likes you. Really, really likes you. He’s literally come here on your days off and the sad look on his face when I tell him you’re not here it’s adorable.”

“He’s almost forty years old,” Will mumbled, blushing harder, “He doesn’t get sad when I’m not here.”

“Yes, he does,” Brian said from behind them, patting Will’s shoulder, “I gave the guy your schedule the other day, not like on paper I just kinda said it and you’d think I gave him a

million dollars."

Will groaned. "You didn't."

"He kept coming here being sad! What was I supposed to do?"

He put his hands over his face and tried not to humiliate himself. His coworkers were nice to him, and they thought this was helping despite him being the oldest worker here. They didn't mean any harm by it.

"I…is there something wrong? Will?"

Will jumped, eyes wide, and saw Hannibal standing a short distance away looking at him in confusion.

"I…no, no," he said, forcing himself to smile, "We were just…they were teasing me. Can I help you find anything?"

Hannibal frowned. "They shouldn't tease you."

Bev sighed. "God you're so…"

Will led Hannibal away from her, blushing hard, and toward the horror section which was really the only one he liked.

"Ignore her."

"You're well? You're certain?"

He smiled. “I’m fine. Did you need something?”

Hannibal blinked. “I…yes…” he looked at the figures on the shelf and picked up an axe murderer, “Do you have more of this one? I wanted to make a display for the holiday.”

Will laughed. “Which holiday?”

He blushed. “I….which would fit it best do you think?”

“Halloween? Sweetest Day maybe? I mean he does have a heart in his hands.”

Hannibal smiled. “Yes, that one. I have some horror romance that will be in by then.”

“It’s June.”

He frowned. “I’m planning ahead.”

Will nodded. “I think we have some more in the back, just let me…”

“Got them!” Bev said, running up to them with four in her hands that she pushed at Will, “Here you go!”

He glared at her and walked over to the register. “Nevermind.”

Will rang him up on the figures and paused halfway when he realized they were almost seventeen dollars each. “You sure you want six?”

Hannibal nodded. “Yes, please.”

“Ok.”

He continued and Hannibal’s sigh made him look up for a minute.

“Have you started Dante’s Inferno yet?”

Will blushed. “Um, no,” he said, “I’ve been busy.”

“I gave it to you several weeks ago.”

“I work two jobs, you know?”

Hannibal blinked. “You do?”

Will sighed. “That’ll be…shit a hundred and ten dollars.”

Hannibal gave him his card and he swiped it, handing him the receipt to sign.

“I thought you knew I had a second job.”

“Brian told me you had an erratic schedule, but no I did not. Where do you work most of your time?”

“This is My Design,” he said, taking the receipt when he signed it, “I…I tattoo people.”

“Oh,” Hannibal said, eyeing Will’s sleeve, “I should have known by your…many tattoos.”

Will smiled and handed him his bag. “A lot of people have tattoos.”

Hannibal eyed him up and down, and Will blushed. “Not like yours. Perhaps I…will visit sometime. I’ve always wanted a specific design on my body, but never quite trusted the process. Would you tattoo me, Will?”

Will swallowed around the lump in his throat. “Um, sure,” he said, “I…I can give you a discount.”

“That won’t be necessary,” Hannibal said, “Have a good afternoon.”

The minute he was gone Will slumped forward, heart beating wildly in his chest, and Bev hugged him suddenly from behind.

“If you do NOT think that man wants to jump your bones, you’re insane. Also, tell him to tattoo his ass so you can check him out.”

Will laughed. “Bev…”

“Will has a bookstore boyfriend,” she sang in his ear, making him blush, “Will has a….”

He shook his head.

“No, I don’t.”

“Will…”

He took off his lanyard and sighed. “I’m gonna take lunch, ok?”

Bev frowned. “Ok.”

Will took off in the opposite direction from The Bookery, and tried to tell himself Bev and Brian were wrong.

There was no way Hannibal was into him like that.

Right?

Day 13: Joker - Western

Will Graham didn't want to be sheriff.

He'd fought against the town begging him to take the role when Sheriff Crawford got into that shootout with Chilton who ended up hanging for that and the Ripper murders he swore he didn't do, though the body parts and grotesque drawings in his home said otherwise. Will had nightmares for weeks after he watched Jack die in his wife's arms, her screams echoing down the road before the undertaker came to collect them. The bloodied bodies of the two men on the road haunted his dreams so long until he had to go see Doc Lecter who offered him some laudanum to ease his rest.

Doc Lecter got him through a lot of bad nights after, sometimes even coming by his ranch, and it was because of him Will became the law in Wolf Trap. His gentle words and praise made Will realize that Wolf Trap needed him, and when his nights grew longer the times when Doc came to see Will at the ranch were a calm in the violence he had to see everyday.

Though when he and Molly, the new schoolteacher, started seeing each other Doc Lecter stopped coming by and Will didn't quite get his coldness in the coming months.

What had he done?

Even now as he stood in the Doc's office, waiting on him, he knew their conversation would be clipped and hollow. He sighed, fingering the gun on his hip, and when the Doc stepped inside his eyes lit up only to quickly darken.

"Sheriff," he said, looking down as he closed the door, "You've been quite lax in your visits."

Will sighed. "It's been a time," he mumbled, blushing, "I had to drag in that crazy fella, the one dressin' up like a bear, the other night. Tier. He's in the box now."

The smirk he saw on Doc Lecter's face made him do the same. "A bear?"

Will chuckled. "You wouldn't believe the sight of him chasin' people down the road. He came pretty easy though."

Doc Lecter set down his board and shook his head. "The lengths people go to not be themselves these days. Open your shirt, please."

Will did just that, and Doc put the metal thing around his neck to Will's chest while he listened to his heartbeat. Their eyes met and Will blushed at how close he was.

"Your heart beat is rather fast," he said, his breath warm against Will's face, "Are you alright?"

He swallowed around the dryness in this throat. "Yeah," he said, "I…it's been a long day."

"I see," he said, moving the metal over slightly, "I'm sure going to see the school teacher later will help ease your troubles."

Will frowned. "She…she's been seeing someone new," he said, "The both of us now, I think. His name is Walter."

Doc frowned. "The both of you? That's…rather untoward."

Will laughed nervously. "I mean, it's not like I had any chance with anyone. Nightmares all night, barely able to keep my mind straight half the time, and…you know…the visions."

Doc pulled the metal away and put his hand to Will's forehead, the warmth of him making Will's body respond in kind. He'd never had this kind of reaction to Doc Lecter before, and he grew even more embarrassed at the thought of him checking him out lower when his cock got happier for the attention.

“She’s…commented on your troubles?”

Will blinked back tears. “I…I kinda had a time of it in front of her the other night when she asked me about Jack.”

Doc stepped back, and the anger in his eyes made Will confused.

“It’s not her business to ask personal questions of you, she’s….she’s not your wife…yet.”

“I know, but—”

“But nothing,” he said, touching Will’s cheek, “If she cannot appreciate you for who you are, Will, then she doesn’t deserve your attentions. You…can find someone who does.”

“Not like there’s anyone here who wants to deal with me.”

Doc blushed and turned away with a sigh. “No, I suppose…there is no such person is there?”

“Doc?”

He wrote something down, and Will let out a long breath when he didn’t answer.

“Doc, can I ask—”

Doc turned and handed Will a paper with his perfect handwriting on it. “You can ask the phamacist to fill this for you,” he said, “Tell him I said it was alright.”

Will frowned. “More laudanum?”

“No, it’s…a mixture of several things that I think will help. Perhaps even with the schoolteacher. She…she wants you calmer, yes?”

“I….”

Doc sighed. “Have a good day, Sheriff.”

Will sat there, confused, and didn’t move.

“Have I done somethin?” he asked, tears stinging his eyes, “You…you don’t come by no more, and when I’m here…”

He turned away again and began to write. “No, I’m just…quite busy.”

Will jumped down off the table and buttoned up his shirt. “Oh,” he said, “I…I guess I’ll see ya.”

Doc didn’t respond, and Will stepped outside feeling worse for wear. He got on his horse, Winston, and went right to the pharmacist to get what the Doc had asked him to though the look on Katz’s face was strange.

“You’re sure it’s this?”

“That’s what he gave me.”

“Alright then,” she said, “I ain’t never seen somethin’ like this before.”

Will went home, took what he was told, and quickly fell asleep.

For almost an entire day.

He was woken by persistent knocking on his door, and felt half asleep when he went to open it. Wally Foster stood there, tears in his eyes, and he grabbed Will's shirt.

"THEY KILLED HER SHERIFF! THEY KILLED HER!"

Will blinked, confused. "Killed who? I…I just woke up, I don't…"

Wally fell to his knees. "They killed our Molly, Sheriff," he sobbed, "She…she's in pieces, just like those Ripper ones. Just like it."

Will froze.

"What?"

No.

It couldn't be.

There was no way.

The Ripper was dead.

Wasn’t he?

Day 14: Wizards and Witches

The North Woods were the last place anyone wanted to die, but that was where Will knew he would. He was curled up against a tree, tears cold against his cheeks, and as the wind picked up he could almost feel eyes on him.

“I can’t take it anymore,” his father said, tossing him there bound at his wrists and ankles.

Will had begged him, said he’d never do it again, and yet there was no love in his eyes as he left him there heading off on his horse in the night.

He closed his eyes and tried to do what he’d done again, but nothing came.

The magic didn’t want to help him.

Will whimpered as a gust of cold came, and though he was nearing his nineteenth summer he felt like a little boy again begging his mother to stay with him.

But she’d run off into the night, some said to find the North witch, and never returned.

No one ever returned from the North Woods.

Will hoped his father didn’t either.

He felt the cold pick up, and knew he’d freeze soon barely covered in clothes too small for him with no food in his belly.

“Please,” he whimpered, “Please, pl…”

His eyes grew heavy, his body growing tired, and the last thing he saw as his eyes closed was a glowing set of eyes in the dark.

And woke up in a bed not his own.

Will was confused as he laid there, warmer than ever, and felt the fire in the fireplace burning hot. He pulled the blanket up over his shoulders, tears in his eyes, and looked around.

“H…hello?”

A minute later the door to the outside burst open, and a tall man with silver hair walked in, his face obscured by his beautiful hair. Will must’ve been tired as the man looked like he was glowing, but as he laid firewood down by the fire he turned and moved the hair from his face.

And Will screamed.

His face was not beautiful, cheeks hollow and mouth wide with perfect razor sharp teeth inside.

“Stop,” he said, and Will froze, unable to make another noise as he came closer.

The man touched his cheek and Will felt warm, so warm, and the smile he gave him was not at all menacing even with the teeth in his mouth.

“You are well,” he said, “Better than you should be, surely, but well. I fed you while you slept, though you did not taste it. His meat will make your magic flourish.”

Will felt his voice return as tears fell down his cheeks. “Whose…meat?”

The man sat on the edge of the bed and took Will's hand to his. His hand glowed when they touched, and Will's eyes widened when the man entwined their fingers.

"Your father's," he said, his voice almost a growl, "The monster who left you to die."

Will gasped, tears falling faster now, and shook his head. "N…no, he…he…."

The man put a hand on his forehead.

"He killed her," he said, "She came to find me, scared of her power, and he followed her. I watched her die and took her magic inside me," he frowned, "She was not the first, nor will she be the last. They fear what they do not understand."

He let out a sob. "My father…I….I ate…my father?"

The man let go of his hand and put both hands on Will's cheeks.

"He deserved worse," he said, his voice softer now, "And you deserved better. They all… deserved better."

Will whimpered. "You're…you're the North Witch?"

The witch smiled. "I prefer to be called a mage," he said, taking his touch away as he held out his hand a flame appearing, "But…yes. I am the monster they told you of."

Will let out a long breath. "Why did you save me?"

The mage looked away.

“Why indeed?”

Day 15: Ancient History

High school was a nightmare.

At least for Will Graham.

He stood in front of his locker in tears, angrier than he'd ever been, and watched Molly, the cheerleader he'd given his Biology notes to, hand them over to Walter Foster, the football player who had just yesterday knocked Will off his bike with his car on the way home. Will still had a bandage on his forehead that made him stand out even more than he already did, and as he pushed his glasses up on his nose he considered skipping last period.

Who needed Ancient History class anyway?

A hug startled him out of his wallowing, and his best friend Beverly Katz kissed his cheek.

"She's a bitch," she said, "Don't look."

"Too late," he sighed, closing his locker, "I gave that bitch my Biology notes."

"Will….c'mon….you know I needed those."

"So did I," he mumbled, turning to frown at her, "Why do I let her walk all over me?"

Bev sighed. "Because she's pretty and you're cute but awkward and antisocial?"

Will laughed. "Yeah."

She hugged him tighter. "Cheer up," she said, leaning in, "I hear the sub for Ancient History is super hot."

He looked at her with a frown. "We have a sub? Where is Mr. Stammets? He seemed just fine yesterday."

"Who cares?" she said, leading him toward his next class, "You have to tell me just how hot he is because I don't have History but I can totally just sneak in or something if I must."

"Bev, you don't even like guys."

Bev grinned. "So? C'mon, Will, tell me tell me!"

"Okay, okay," he sighed, "I…I'll go I guess."

"Thank you," she said, "He hasn't come out all day and he literally put a curtain or something over the little window on the door so…"

The bell rang and Will detangled himself from her.

“I gotta go!”

“Run! You need a good seat!”

Will didn’t run, even as he saw other people running into the room ahead of him, and ended up in the last seat right in the middle of the front row. The class seemed crowded, most of these people hardly ever even showed up to Senior Ancient History, but this new substitute must be something special to bring them all in.

“Welcome to Ancient History,” the substitute’s accented voice said from behind him, making Will want to turn but didn’t, “I am Mr. Lecter, though you can call me Sir if you prefer. I am substituting for Mr. Stammets, who has sadly come down with food poisoning. Now…”

He came up to the board, still hard to see though Will took in his flashy expensive suit and nice butt. Mr. Stammets usually wore rumpled messy dress shirts and khakis to class, plus his butt wasn’t all that nice.

Mr. Lecter wrote his name on the board and turned just as the class erupted in whispering and gasps.

Oh.

It seemed their substitute wasn’t just hot.

He was really, really hot.

Will had navigated his sexuality on a sliding scale, not ever really sticking to any gender, but Mr. Lecter was both handsome and pretty. He had an almost sculpted look to him, like he wasn’t quite real, and as he smiled Will’s heart skipped a beat.

“....and I hope to bring the bloody world of ancient Rome to you as no one ever has before… if I have the time.”

“You can bring me anything you damn want.”

He heard the whispered words behind him and blushed as Mr. Lecter turned his head as if he’d also picked up on the whispers. Will’s blush deepened as Mr. Lecter paused at his desk and leaned down to smile at him.

“Well,” he said, “I’ll take that under advisement Mister…”

Will’s eyes widened. “I didn’t say that!” he said, “I don’t know who did but…”
Several people laughed around him, and Will felt tears fill his eyes.

This was his worst nightmare. He got up, grabbed his things, and ran out hearing Mr. Lecter call after him. He went right to the boys bathroom, hiding on the toilet with his legs up, and let the tears that had wanted to fall earlier finally wet his cheeks.

He couldn’t go back to class.

No way.

Will cried till the bell rang, and he waited until every last sound was gone. He washed his hands despite not needing to, and went to leave but froze as a familiar voice cut through the quiet.

“I apologize, Mister Graham.”

He turned to see Mr. Lecter standing against the wall. “I…”

Mr. Lecter came up to put a hand on his shoulder. “I…I should not have teased you in front of your peers that way, and I know it was not you as the young man who said it said much more after you were gone. I should not have singled you out to become a subject of ridicule. Please forgive my rudeness.”

Will blinked back tears. “I…ok.”

“Do you have a way home today? I…I just need to clean up but I can take you.”

Will blushed. “I…I couldn’t.”

“It’s the least I can do.”

He let Mr. Lecter lead him back to the classroom, blushing so hard he thought he’d explode, and couldn’t stop the fast beat of his heart.

There was no way this was happening.

Absolutely no way.

High school was a nightmare and always had been for Will.

But it seemed that maybe one good thing would happen before he graduated.

He couldn’t wait to tell Bev.

Day 16: Road Trip

His divorce is finalized on a Tuesday.

It's rainy, the kind of rain where you can't even leave the house, and he has to drag Winston out to take a piss but when the message comes from his lawyer he feels it in his chest.

You're officially divorced.

Will thought he'd feel something when it was truly over, but all he feels is relief. He and Molly weren't good for each other, hadn't been for a long time, and even knowing she'd been cheating with her ex-husband hadn't hurt as much as he thought it would.

But even with the relief comes the urge to do something.

You never want to do anything.

God, Will, are you just gonna hide forever?

I feel like I'm locked up here with you.

He's lived in his apartment only for seven months but suddenly it feels like a fate worse than death to stay. So he takes all his sick time - thirty two days - and packs up the car with Winston in the passenger seat before he just *drives.*

Will had always wanted to go on a road trip, just like in the movies, but his genuine hatred of socializing resulted in no friends and even Molly had been a dog park fluke.

No.

He could do this with Winston, silent but loyal, and as they leave the state he feels freer than he has in a long time.

Then, of course, only three days into his trip the killings begin.

They call him The Wanderer.

Mostly because he leaves bodies across the states. Beautiful, elaborate tableaus of horror that are found almost always by hikers. The Wanderer seems to want to be seen, but not seen, and though Will has struggled with his past leaving the FBI for his mental health he can't help when he gets drawn into the case.

And the dreams begin.

He wakes up in a cold sweat, blood soaked images haunting his nightmares, and Winston usually wakes him up pulling on his shirt when he's screaming. Will gets kicked out of three different hotel rooms in Tennessee, leaving the state in the middle of the night barely dressed, and when he reaches Illinois he reads about the body found just two states behind him.

The Wanderer is almost trailing him, looming closer and closer, and when in North Carolina he can hardly sleep sucking down cheap coffee in diners that let him bring the dog.

Which is where he meets Dr. Hannibal Lecter.

Dr. Lecter is in North Carolina for a conference, Will had seen the signs for the Psychiatric Association of Medicine event just blocks away, and though it's odd to see someone dressed in Armani sipping shitty coffee at two a.m. he still blushes when he notices the man's eyes on him. It's just the two of them, other than the waitress, and though he's sure a night with someone who looks so out of his league he might as well be on Mars would be nice he's not in the mood.

But it's still nice to be admired.

Molly never once looked at him the way the stranger does, and when he gets up to stop at Will's table he finds himself blushing.

"Is this seat taken?"

His accented voice is oddly thrilling, and when Will looks up he realizes the man is better looking than he realized.

"Kinda," he says, looking at the dog, "And he's not really one for sharing."

"I see," the man says, looking at the dog, "May I?"

He slides in beside Winston, who easily lets him, and Will laughs at the face he makes when the dog licks his cheek. "See?"

The handkerchief he pulls out looks just as expensive as the suit, but it's oddly adorable when he wipes his face. "Yes, I…see," he looks at Will and holds out his hand that Will takes, "Dr. Hannibal Lecter."

"Will Graham," he says, unable to keep his own admiration secret, "And I'm just gonna say this before you even try. I'm flattered, but I just got divorced like a little over a week ago and…"

"You're so certain I was staring at you out of sexual attraction."

Will frowns. "Yeah, I mean…wait….if you're not I…shit."

“No, no,” Hannibal says, smiling, “I was. I was just trying to save my own pride. I apologize.”

“Oh,” Will laughs, rubbing the back of his neck, “Thank god. I thought I was gonna have to buy your…what was it you’ve been having other than coffee?”

The waitress comes over and hands him another mug that she fills.

“Gladys makes a very good apple tart,” Hannibal says, “I’ve had two, but as it’s so late…I should not have more.”

Gladys blushes. “You’re such a dear.”

He smiles as she leaves.

“Wow, she hasn’t stopped glaring at me since I brought the dog inside.”

Hannibal frowns. “Has she?”

“Yeah, I…I asked if he was allowed, since they have the sign on the door and all. She said yes but I think she meant no.”

“Hmm.”

Hannibal watches Gladys, eyeing her oddly, and Will blushes.

“But it’s fine, honestly, I….I’ve been forcing him on people all over the US. It was bound to happen sooner or later.”

He turns to Will. “All over?”

Will blushes. “I’ve been…I’m on a road trip.”

“Oh,” Hannibal says, “That’s…it’s an odd time for it. What is it you do, Will?”

“I’m a history teacher,” Will says, “I took off the last month before we get out of school because of the divorce and…yeah you don’t want to hear this.”

“I wouldn’t have asked if I didn’t.”

He smiles. “Well…”

Will proceeds to tell Hannibal pretty much everything, about Molly and Walter, even about the cheating, and when he’s about to bring up the Wanderer he pauses.

“Will?”

He takes a sip of his coffee, a little cold now, and sighs. “You didn’t ask why I’m here.”

Hannibal looks down at his hands, then up again. “I know insomnia when I see it, or…is this not involuntary?”

Will blinks back tears. “I…I used to work for…I helped solve murders.”

The surprise he sees in Hannibal's eyes is genuine. "Used to?"

"I quit because it fucked with me mentally," he sighs, "I…I have this thing where I can assume the killer's point of view, and it…it got hard to keep them out after they came in. You know? I…I couldn't take it anymore."

"Will…"

"And I…I made the mistake of…looking into the Wanderer," he looks up at Hannibal, "And now he's," he puts fingers against his temple as a tear falls down his face, "...in here. I have nightmares and…he's getting closer. He was only a few states away when I got here. I feel like he's *following me* . I know it's crazy…"

Hannibal puts a hand on Will's. "It's not crazy, Will," he says, "You have anxiety related to your past and it was bound to happen when you began looking into such a gruesome subject. I imagine your fears will only grow if you don't rescind this particular monster's point of view."

"Don't tell me you can cure me, because I…no offense…hate shrinks. I had counselors and shrinks all my life tell me I was crazy. I don't need you to do the same."

"I would never."

"I…"

He takes both of Will's hands and squeezes, his gaze filled with sadness.

"I would never attempt to cure you of this, Will, you…I wouldn't advise that method."

Will sniffles. "Then what…"

“I would tell you not to hide from him,” he says, his voice shaking, “Let…let him in and see what happens. You may be surprised.”

His eyes widen and he shakes his head. “NO! I…” he sees Gladys turn to look at him sharply, “No, no, I…” he takes his hands back, “No fucking way.”

“Will..”

Will gets up, whistling, and Winston climbs under the table coming to his side. He throws down a twenty and sighs. “Thanks for..the talk but…I’m fine with hiding. Goodnight, Dr. Lecter.”

He drives away, shaken up from the encounter, and goes to get two more cups of late night coffee before returning to the hotel. Will stares at them, hands shaking, and thinks about what Hannibal said.

Let him in and see what happens.

Will doesn’t know why he does it.

Curiosity?

But he doesn’t drink his coffee.

Two hours later he falls asleep with Winston at his side, and in his dreams it’s not Hannibal in the diner with him.

It’s the Wanderer.

He's a phantom, dressed in a black robe, but Will knows it's him. He holds Will's hand in his, smothering them with blood, and Will tries to scream, pulling away but can't even when he realizes whose blood is on his hands.

Gladys.

She's lying across the counter, eyes gouged out and tongue on a plate that sits on her chest.

He wakes up screaming, voice hoarse, and something compels him to look at the news.

THE WANDERER KILLS WAITRESS

Will reads the words, eyes wide, and feels like he can't breathe.

Gladys Harlow, aged 66, found dead at the Pit Stop Diner.

He stares at his hands, and though he knows it's not there he's almost sure there's blood all over them.

"He's here," he whimpers, hands over his mouth as tears fall down his cheeks.

Hannibal's voice echoes in Will's mind as he curls in a fetal position, shaking so badly he can't hold the phone in his hands.

"Let him in and see what happens. You may be surprised."

Day 17: Fallen Angel

It wasn't easy being a pastor's son.

Which was why Will Graham was struggling.

This was the fourth time they'd moved in less than a year, his parents' infidelities and struggling marriage making his life a living hell with no friends. It had been only a month but he still had no friends, no outlet other than the bible and the one hour of TV a week his parents allowed.

That is until he finds the Library.

It's strange how it just seems to appear out of nowhere on his walk home, the words WOLF TRAP LIBRARY almost glittering in the sun they're so pristine. He doesn't have a card, or even a way to get one, but still walks inside ignoring the lack of cars in the parking lot.

And as he looks back and forth he feels oddly at peace before he stares straight ahead into the eyes of the librarian at the desk.

He's got sandy brown hair, perfectly styled, is wearing a three piece suit with a checkered pattern, and his eyes seem to almost glow in the bright sun at it streams through the skylight above him.

"Welcome," he says as Will walks forward, "It's always nice to lure in a new young man. How man I help you?"

Will blushes and pushes the glasses up on his nose. "I…I don't have a library card, Sir. We just moved here a few weeks ago and…"

The man reaches into a drawer and puts on a nametag that catches Will's eye.

Mr. Lecter.

"Please, call me Mr. Lecter or even… Hannibal . Sir is such a formal moniker and I've never preferred it."

Will blushes. "My parents wouldn't approve of me calling an adult by their first name, S–Mr. Lecter."

Mr. Lecter smiles. "Ah," he says, "A well behaved young man then. I can get you a library card, if you so desire."

"Don't you need my parents' permission or something?" Will asks, frowning.

“No,” Mr. Lecter says, turning to the computer and typing so quickly it’s almost otherworldly, “Students are…exempt…from such things here. I know there are certain sects of the community who would hinder your quest for knowledge and I would never promote such things,” he says, looking up at Will, “Your name?”

“Will,” he says, his voice shaking slightly, “Will Graham.”

Mr. Lecter’s smile widens. “Pastor Graham’s only son,” he says, “Hmm. You are…not what I pictured.”

Will blinks. “You know my father?”

Mr. Lecter types but doesn’t look away from Will, not once. “Oh yes,” he says, “Your father came here the day your family arrived and very vehemently disavowed the contents of my teen section saying he would call for a protest.”

Will frowns. “I don’t remember my father protesting anything.”

Mr. Lecter looks down, pressing one button, and Will hears a machine start to make noise.

“No, he…he seemed to have found other avenues of attention he’d rather indulge in.”

He blushes.

Did his father have a new mistress already?

“Oh,” he says, “I…I’m sure he wouldn’t want me here then. I wouldn’t even be able to bring a book home, let alone….”

Mr. Lecter leans down, picking something up, and then holds it out to Will.

It has his new address on it, his name, and WOLF TRAP LIBRARY right on top.

“Here you are.”

His eyes widen as he takes the card. “Oh, this…wow. I don’t know what to say. I shouldn’t…”

“It’s your choice, Will,” Mr. Lecter says, “But if you feel as if your father would not allow you to bring a book home you can always come here no questions asked. I’m certain your parents’ wouldn’t even notice your absence a few hours a week. Would they?”

Will takes the card, fingers brushing Mr. Lecter’s, and when he looks at him again his eyes look almost red in the sun.

“You sound so sure.”

Lecter smiles. “I am very sure. Please…explore.”

Will nods, smiling, and takes off to the teen section finding things like manga and even some novels abouts subjects his parents' would never allow. He takes them to a table and begins to read, feeling more at ease than ever.

No one comes into the library the entire time he's there, but he doesn't notice.

He finishes three books, and looks up at the time frowning.

Only an hour had passed.

"That can't be right."

"What cannot be right?"

Will turns in surprise to see Mr. Lecter pushing a cart. "It's…only been an hour."

Mr. Lecter looks at the wall clock and takes out his cellular phone. "Yes, that's the time."

"It just…it felt like longer."

He smiles. "One always feels as if they get lost in a book, don't they? Time has little meaning."

Will blushes. "I guess so," he says, standing as he holds his books in hand, "I…do you want me to put them back?"

"You can leave them there, Will. I'm sure you have to go, don't you?"

"Y…yeah," he sighs, "I've probably been here too long already."

"I hope to see you again soon," Mr. Lecter says, "Have a good night."

Will nods, rushing towards the door, but pauses when he sees a display.

THE DEVIL IN DISGUISE

It's all books about the Devil, some even romance, and right by the entrance that he's almost sure wasn't there before. His eyes widen as he gets closer, and the cover of one Lucifer is depicted with wings on fire falling into another man's arms.

"Oh."

He picks up the book, blushing as he reads the synopsis about the Devil falling to Earth and being taken in by a widower who nurses him back to health. The two men fall in love.

"A favorite of mine."

He puts the book back, blushing harder. "I wasn't…"

Mr. Lecter fixes the display. "No need to apologize for your interest," he says, "I'm sure your father has made Lucifer a monster in your life so to see him in such a…positive light…is

jarring."

Will feels like he's done something wrong, and tears fill his eyes. "The Devil is bad," he says, "This isn't right. You're…it's not right."

Mr. Lecter picks up the novel Will put down. "Is that what your father tells you, Will? That it's not right?"

"I…"

He puts the book in Will's hands. "It's yours," he says, "I have another."

"No, I don't…"

"Your father won't even notice it," he says, the words feeling like a promise, "I can guarantee that. No one but you and I will know you have it, and…it's yours to do with what you please."

Will's hands are shaking as he holds the book.

THE DEVIL'S LOVE

"I…"

"It's time to go now, Will. I hope to see you soon."

Will runs out of the library, shaking so badly he almost trips when he steps outside, and runs all the way home.

It feels like he's committed a terrible sin.

But when he gets home and opens his backpack the book is there with his textbooks and he doesn't even remember putting it inside.

He goes to lock his door and sits on his bed, blushing as he opens the book.

He's just going to look.

Just look.

Will loses time as he falls into the book, tears in his eyes at the story, and steps outside to find again only less than an hour has passed.

How can this be?

He frowns.

"Mom? Dad?"

Will walks around the house but there's no one inside, and he grabs a sandwich heading back up again.

There’s no harm in a few more pages.

Is there?

Day 18: Alternate - Theatre

Every month Hannibal took himself out for the evening.

He didn't go to his usual haunts: no operas, expensive restaurants, or even the symphony.

No.

Hannibal went to the movie theater.

His local theater, Cineplex 13, showed a different play or opera event every month that rarely drew many. He'd been the only one in the theater to watch La Traviata, which had almost felt like being in Florence for the real event save for the sticky seats. Hannibal always bought himself water and nothing else, sitting in the seats while he was immersed in the music.

This month they were playing Hamlet, which may draw a crowd but he'd made sure to get a good seat and so far there were only two others in there with him. He parked outside, happy to see so few cars, and headed in to print his ticket before grabbing a water bottle. The man working the counter had his back turned when he walked up, standing behind a woman obviously ordering popcorn, and when the theater worker turned around he froze.

The young man behind the counter was the most beautiful person he'd ever seen in his entire life. He smiled, handing the woman her popcorn, and she said something that made him laugh. Hannibal's heart skipped a beat, and when the woman left he found himself at a loss for words.

"What can I get you?" the young man, whose nametag read WILL, asked.

He swallowed, letting out a breath before he smiled. "A bottle of water, please," he asked.

“That’s all?” Will asked, “We got a lot here.”

“I…I’m unsure if I’d enjoy anything among what’s offered. Do you have a recommendation?”

Will blinked and looked as if he’d never been asked such a question. “Um, I guess the pretzel bites? If you like pretzels and cheese, of course, I…”

Hannibal fully knew he would not let a single bit of the ‘pretzel bites’ touch his tongue, and yet he said, “Pretzel bites, please along with the water,” anyway.

Will came back with both, and said he owed a little over ten dollars for both. Hannibal saw a tip jar against the cash register and put in a fifty dollar bill before he left. Hopefully it would go to Will, or at the very least, part of it would. He threw the pretzel bites away the minute he got to his theater and headed inside where he spent nearly three hours immersed in Hamlet. The crowd was sparse, which surprised him, and when he left he couldn’t help but look over to see Will once more.

There was a crowd now, and Will seemed a bit overworked but he still looked quite handsome. Hannibal tried not to linger and left, thinking he may not see Will for quite some time.

But something made him go back the very next day at the very same time.

There were no showings of Hamlet or anything that wasn’t a film he knew he’d abhor but he bought a ticket to “Fury Forever” some horrible car chase themed monstrosity heading up to the snack counter in hopes to see Will.

He was disappointed to not see Will and bought his same water, heading for the theater.

Perhaps Will didn’t work often, which would prove difficult if he wanted to see him. He was halfway there when he spotted someone coming out of the theater beside his with a broom in

hand laughing with a young woman.

Will.

He had different jobs, of course he did, and that meant Hannibal may not see him always at the counter. Hannibal paused, watching, and when Will parted ways with his coworker noticing him he froze.

“Hey,” Will said, “Back already?”

Hannibal smiled. “I…I suppose I had thought of broadening my palette.”

Will laughed, and looked over at the theater. “Fury Forever?” he laughed, “I didn’t think that would be your thing.”

“It…isn’t,” Hannibal admitted, “I wanted to see a film but the others…”

Will grinned. “I’d recommend, “Splatter,” he said, “It’s only a few theaters down and…it starts in five minutes.”

“I thought it was against the rules to go into a theater not your own.”

“It is,” Will said, “But I won’t tell if you won’t.”

“Are the seats not hand picked?”

Will frowned. “True, I…hey come back with me to the front.”

Hannibal frowned. “But…”

“C’mon.”

Hannibal followed, unsure why, and Will brought him to a kiosk where he pressed some buttons and a seating chart popped up. It was barely full, as it was still mid-morning, and he looked up at Will. “Is this…”

“Pick one,” Will said, “I’ll just say you wanted yours refunded, it’s fine.”

Hannibal smiled and pressed the screen. “Thank you.”

“No problem.”

“You’re rather adept at the system for someone who’s worked here a short time.”

Will smiled, blushing. “It’s not that hard,” he said, grabbing the printed ticket that he tore, “All set. Enjoy.”

Their fingers brushed when Hannibal grabbed the ticket, and he licked his lips. “If I don’t…I know just who to complain to.”

Will laughed. “I’ll be here.”

He headed for the Splatter theater, feeling warm all over, and looked back once more to see Will watching him. Will looked away, and Hannibal smiled again.

Perhaps he needed to broaden his palette even further in other ways.

And, if he was lucky, Will would help with that too.

Day 19: Shapeshifters

“I did not expect to be seeing you so soon.”

Will sighed and crossed off three names in his appointment book before he looked up at the man across from him.

“Neither did I, but unfortunately for me and fortunately for you….three of the people in my book were all no shows. What do you want from me, Dr. Lecter?”

Dr. Hannibal Lecter smiled. “I’d like to buy your services for the remainder of the year.”

He blinked.

“That’s…seven months,” he said, frowning, “It…that’s at least…I wouldn’t even consider it for under half a million.”

“I’m prepared to offer you two million dollars as long as I remain your sole client for the next seven months.”

Will felt like his heart was pounding in his chest, and instantly felt like this would be a mistake. He’d never taken on a client for more than a month, as his body could hardly handle more than that, and to think he’d have to manage *seven* seemed unfathomable.

“Who…who would you want me to be?”

Hannibal reached into his pocket and took out a small photo that he put face down on Will’s desk pushing it forward. Will was a little scared to turn it over, his hand shaking, and when he did he blinked.

“This is *me* ,” he said, confused, “You want me to be *me* ? That’s not how this works. I’m a shapeshifter, Dr. Lecter. Rich people come to shapeshifters because there are so few of us, and we…pretend to be people we’re not behind closed doors or even out in the open. I…” he laughed, pushing the picture back, “This is crazy, why would you want me to be *me?* How would you even…how do you even have a picture of me?”

He reached across the desk and grabbed Will’s hand, the intensity of his gaze making Will blush.

“You do not remember me.”

Will blinked. “Should I?”

He sighed. “I came to your lecture five months ago where you promoted your book, before it was…sadly canceled because of the backlash.”

Will winced and pulled his hand back. “It was a mistake to…talk about that stuff openly,” he said, blushing, “I shouldn’t have even thought of doing it. Shapeshifting is a business, but it’s still underground for…a certain clientele. I’m not doing charity work, and I shouldn’t have…”

“You’ve saved lives, Mr. Graham,” Hannibal said, shaking his head, “You’ve healed broken hearts, you’ve….given people things no one else can. There are so few shapeshifters in existence, but you are still the one everyone wants because of your brilliance. You…you deserved to be able to share your story. I…I was sad not to be able to read it.”

He blinked back tears. “Thank you, Dr. Lecter, but…if this is some sort of pity…”

“On the contrary,” Hannibal said, “I…I thought you were quite possibly the most beautiful creature I’ve ever seen even before your transformations before our eyes. You…you have a gift, yes, but….no matter who you change into it has still been *you* who has haunted my

every waking thought. I was overjoyed when I finally was pushed up this list, Will. I… please…I just want to experience everything that is to know about *you.* Just *you* .”

Will blushed as a tear fell down his cheek. “You might not like what you see.”

He reached over to take Will’s hand softly, his touch feather light, and kissed Will’s knuckles as he looked up with a need Will had never seen outside of a shapeshift before.

“I find that very hard to believe,” he said, his voice like silk, “Will you take my contract? No shifting? Just you?”

Will let out a long breath. “I…it would just be us? Just us two?”

“Yes,” Hannibal said, smiling, “I want us to go away together, alone, and…I want to experience you.”

He felt an odd heat pool in his belly. “Sex will cost more.”

“I’d rather not pay for sex,” Hannibal said, his fingers brushing Will’s fingers, “But…if you’d rather I did name your price.”

Will let out a long breath.

“Five,” he said, “Five million dollars for seven months, everything you want from me. I…I would be yours completely until January.”

The desire in Hannibal’s eyes made Will’s whole body shiver.

“Done.”

He knew this was a mistake.

There was a reason why shapeshifters didn't take lovers, jumping from one person to another, but he felt like he couldn't say no.

Seven months as himself.

What a strange concept.

Will grabbed Hannibal's hand and shook it softly, blushing already.

"Then I guess I'm all yours."

Hannibal smiled.

"Yes, I suppose you are."

Day 20: Reconnection

Will didn't exactly like talking to ghosts.

But it paid the bills, and since they wouldn't leave him alone why not get paid?

He charged five hundred for a half hour "reconnection" and eleven hundred for an hour.

Why?

Because every time he let one of them in for too long….they didn't want to leave.

He'd had some ghosts try to take control in the past if he kept them in too long, fighting them off for hours after, and charging more made sense. Though a lot of people got mad at him for it.

Like the woman in front of him now.

"Mrs. Komeda, as I said on the phone…."

The older woman was dressed to the nines, even had a fur shawl around her neck, and yet she was balking at eleven hundred dollars.

"All you're doing is talking to Sydney! You know, that's entirely too much…"

"If you can't pay the price, Mrs. Komeda, I have other clients who can."

She glared at him. “Of course I can pay,” she spat, shaking her head as he pulled out a checkbook, “I just…”

Will put his hand over hers. “No,” he said, “I’d rather not.”

Mrs. Komeda blinked at him. “What do you mean you’d ‘rather not?’ I said I could pay.”

He shook his head. “Yes, I know,” he said, “But…I’d rather not talk to your husband today, or ever.”

“I NEVER!” she yelled, pulling her hand away, “THIS IS AN OUTRAGE! I…a dimestore psychic, telling me I can’t…”

The door opened behind her in his office, and Will saw he pause as she saw the man who walked inside.

“Hannibal,” she said, standing straighter as the man took her in, “This charlatan…”

The man, Hannibal, looked at Will. “If she is leaving, are you free now?”

Will smiled. “Yes, Sir, I am.”

Mrs. Komeda scoffed. “Hannibal, you can’t—”

Hannibal took her arm, and led her to the door that he opened kindly. “I’ve been eager to use Mister Graham’s services, Eugenia,” he said smoothly, “And if you no longer are…I am taking my chance. Have a good evening.”

She sat there, looking confused, and walked out like she couldn't tell him no. The minute the door closed Will let out a long breath.

"Thank you for that."

Hannibal smiled. "You're welcome, Mister…"

"Will," he said, holding out his hand, "Call me Will. Mister…"

"Dr. Hannibal Lecter," he said, shaking Will's hand, "I…I've heard nothing but good things about your 'reconnections' and I've been…torn with attempting one."

Will frowned as he let Hannibal's hand go. "Ok, Dr. Lecter…"

"Hannibal," he said, smiling, "If I can call you Will, you can call me Hannibal."

Will smiled. "Ok, Hannibal," he said, "Can I ask why you've been so torn?"

Hannibal's pained expression made Will's chest ache. "I…can I sit?"

Will nodded and led him to the table where Will usually did his reconnections, pulling out a chair Hannibal sat down on. "Hold that, I'm gonna lock the door."

"Of course."

He walked over, locked the door, and came back to sit with a sigh. "So…"

“When I was twelve years old my entire family was murdered,” he said, his voice shaking, “I…I was the sole survivor.”

Will’s eyes widened. “Oh, that’s horrible. I’m so sorry.”

“Thank you.”

“So you want to reconnect with them?”

Hannibal sighed. “My sister,” he said, “I…I want to ask…if she…forgives me.”

Will frowned. “Forgives you?”

“For not saving her.”

He felt tears fill his eyes. “Hannibal…is that why you’ve been so torn? Because you’re scared of her answer?”

Hannibal looked away and lifted a handkerchief up to pat his eyes. “Yes.”

“Ok,” Will said, “I…I think I can do this. How old was she?”

“Seven.”

Will clutched his chest.

Seven.

The younger ghosts were the hardest to let go of always, and often when people came to see him they had reasons not to move on which made it harder.

“So, how long were you…”

“An hour,” Hannibal said, “I…I’d like the hour.”

Will paused.

He usually restricted the younger ghosts to a half hour, just to keep them for the least amount, but something made him keep his protests to himself. “Ok,” he said, “I…I can do that.”

“Her name?”

Hannibal let out a breath. “Mischa,” he said, “Her name was Mischa.”

“Mischa,” Will said, “I…do you want to do this now?”

Hannibal looked at him just as a tear fell down his cheek. “Yes.”

Will held out his hand. “Take my hand.”

Hannibal took his hand and Will closed his eyes.

“Mischa,” he said, “Mischa, your brother is here to speak with you. He…he wants to ask you a question. Mischa…Mischa are you…”

He felt a cold grip on both their hands and opened his eyes to see the ghost of a young girl standing between them. She had blood on her neck and dress, but she smiled at him so sweetly he couldn't keep the tears from falling.

"Hello."

Will could see the resemblance between her and Hannibal, their eyes almost identical.

"Hello. Do you want to talk to Hannibal?"

She looked at her brother.

"Hanni misses me. I…I miss him too. Can we?"

Will sighed.

"Yes, you're…you're welcome to use me."

The rest was a blur.

Like…all of it.

A blur.

That didn't happen.

Not ever.

He woke with his head in Hannibal's lap, lying on the floor, and stared up at him in shock in the dark while the light of the office illuminated them.

"What happened?"

Hannibal's face was wet with tears. "You…you brought her back to me."

"I…"

A sudden cold burst made Will turn to see Mischa come around the corner, her concern obvious.

"Did I hurt you? I didn't want to hurt you. Are you hurt?"

Will blinked.

"How long have I been gone?"

Hannibal frowned.

"Mischa was here for…exactly three hours."

Will froze.

"Three hours?"

“I will, of course, pay you for your time. I…I thought you could limit them yourself, so I did not expect it but…” Hannibal smiled as he touched Will’s cheek, “You gave me a wonderful gift money could not repay. Thank you, Will. Thank you.”

Mischa floated above Will, and took his hand.

“Thank you, Mister Will. Thank you for letting me see Hanni again. I…I like you a lot. Can we be friends?”

Will shook his head.

“You have to go. You’re not supposed to stay.”

Mischa’s face fell.

“But I want to stay. I…I like you a lot. I think Hanni likes you too.”

“Will? Will, are you alright?”

Will shook his head.

“No,” he said, “I’m…I’m not. She’s still here.”

Hannibal blinked.

“She…Mischa? You can see her?”

Will looked at her. “Yes.”

“Do you usually…”

“I see them,” he said, “But I…I can get them to go easily after an hour. It’s been a long time, and she…she doesn’t want to leave.”

Hannibal grabbed Will’s hand in his and stared at him with wide eyes.

“Let her stay,” he said, “Please, let her….she’s so lonely,” he said, his voice shaking, “She… she’s afraid to leave and…can you help her? Can you…help her move on?”

Will blinked. “What? That’s not my…”

“I’ll pay you,” Hannibal said, squeezing his hand, “I…I’ll pay anything.”

Mischa shook her head. *“I don’t wanna go, Will. I don’t…Hanni needs me. He needs me.”*

Will let out a long breath.

He’d made a terrible mistake.

What was he going to do?

Day 21: Coaches

Will still remembers when Lacey walked out on him.

It was a Sunday, rainy, and he woke up to a note that simply read:

I told you I never wanted to be a mother.

He'd known she was unhappy, hell they both were, but she was the one who told him she wanted to keep Abigail and he'd very reluctantly offered to marry her.

Thankfully they didn't make it down the aisle.

Will had gone to Abby's room after that, note in hand, and watched her sleeping till she woke hungrily crying. He fed her sitting in the rocking chair with the last of Lacey's breastmilk.

That was seven years ago.

Now he was a single dad, barely making ends meet, but happy enough to say yes when he was asked to coach his daughter's soccer team. He knew jack shit about soccer and ended up looking up so much online getting laughed at by the coaches of other teams the first year but soon it was like second nature. Their team wasn't the best in the state, but they were happy girls and he enjoyed the work.

This year's tryouts were more of a formality, most of the same girls were on the team every single year really, and as he smiled at familiar faces he was struck by one very unfamiliar face in the line.

The man was wearing a suit, the weather balmy enough for it but still out of place, and his perfectly styled hair was immaculate. There was a little girl beside him, wearing an obvious

bought uniform to get his attention, her blonde hair in pigtails as she smiled at everyone who passed by.

He blushed when they got to the front, the man's aftershave the best thing he'd ever smelled in his entire life - and his grandmother made amazing apple crisp cookies that he still had dreams about ten years after she died - and when Will spoke his voice shook.

"I…are you new in town?"

The man looked up and smiled. "We've just moved here from overseas," he said, "Mischa's mother…passed away unexpectedly."

Mischa smiled. "I don't miss her."

Will blinked. "Um, ok?"

The man put his hand on Mischa's back. "She's proficient in the fundamentals," he said, "And she has worked with a private coach the last few months to prepare. I think you'll be pleasantly surprised."

"Um…ok? Show me what you've got then Mischa…" he looked at the application, "Lecter?"

Mischa ran out to the field and her father, Hannibal, his name apparently was, was right.

He was *definitely* surprised.

Mischa was a monster.

She got past the team's defenses with ease, almost tripping Abigail more than once but not on purpose it seemed, and when she was done he was in shock when she ran up to her father.

"DADDY DID YOU SEE? DID YOU?"

Hannibal smiled and touched her cheek, the obvious love in his eyes making Will's heart ache.

"You were perfect, Mazasis."

Will walked up to them, clipboard in hand, feeling oddly nervous.

"So…um….Mischa is…do you want to play with the Butterflies this season, Mischa?"

"YES!" she said, hugging Will.

Hannibal smiled. "Thank you, Mister…"

He held out his hand and Hannibal took it. The obvious smoothness of his skin made Will blush, but he could also feel rough lines there like Hannibal wasn't what he seemed.

"Graham," he said, "Will Graham."

"Will," Hannibal said, "It's a pleasure to meet you."

Will blushed. "Um, the pleasure is all mine."

Hannibal's smile widened. "We shall see, won't we?"

He laughed out loud, not used to such blatant flirting after so long a drought in his personal life.

"Um, I think you should know that…"

"Daddy?"

Will turned to see Abigail looking almost scared, her glare at Mischa making Will feel bad.

"Abby, this is…"

She hugged Will. "Is she gonna be on the team, Daddy?"

"Yes, she…she's really good."

"I guess," Abby mumbled, "She almost tripped me a buncha times."

He frowned as Mischa's face fell. "I…I didn't mean to."

Abigail buried her face against Will, and he felt bad.

"It was an accident, I'm sure."

Hannibal frowned. "Mischa, apologize."

“I’m sorry.”

Abigail moved her face, and still glared at her. “Ok.”

He and Hannibal exchanged looks.

“Hey, why don’t we all go out for ice cream? It’s…”

“I don’t wanna,” Abigail said, “I’m tired.”

Hannibal put his hand on Will’s shoulder. “It’s fine, Mr. Graham,” he said, sounding way too formal, “Another time.”

“I…”

Hannibal picked Mischa up, and her sad little eyes were full of tears.

“Bye, Mr. Graham.”

He watched them go, feeling terrible, but also torn as he looked down at Abby.

He sighed.

Apparently coaching was gonna be very difficult this year.

Day 22: Celebrities

“So….are we gonna address the elephant in the room?”

Will paused as he took a sip of his water, throat dry from all the talking he’d done for this interview already, and felt his chest tighten.

“That depends on the elephant.”

The omega interviewing him, her name was Natalie he thought, smiled slightly.

“Hannibal Lecter.”

He set down his drink a little too loudly, and for a minute hoped it cracked the glass table.

“What about him?” he asked, not looking up.

“You and he were pretty close on the set of ‘Alpha Mart.’ There were rumors you were pretty much courting openly for months and then when it premiered there was *nothing* . You didn’t even do interviews together.”

Will’s lip curled.

He’d agreed to this “tell all” interview because he knew it would hype up his first non-romantic role in ‘Resist’ and he’d had to allow one question about Hannibal or they wouldn’t even put him on at all.

But now he wished he’d just said no.

“Hannibal is Hannibal,” he said, blinking back tears as he looked up at her, “We got close, and we…we might’ve been closer than friends but now we’re not. I don’t want to tell a story he hasn’t, and I’m not the type of man who kisses and tells. It didn’t work out. Sometimes it's the right person, wrong time, and I think….it’s not our time.”

Natalie’s eyes widened. “So, you think there *could* be a right time?”

Will scoffed. “He’s close to being mated to Bedelia DuMaurier,” he said, trying not to sound bitter, “And he’s happy. I’m not gonna sit here and say I’m thrilled with how things ended, but I’m not going to be that type of omega. We’re different people, and…I’ve come to understand that. Now can we move on and talk about the movie?”

She nodded, looking at him with pity that made him wish he’d just stopped at one response, and for the rest of the interview Will was so close to snapping he hardly held on. He didn’t bother to say a word when he left after, and was met by his manager, Alana, outside with a travel tumbler full of whiskey that he drank gladly.

“Never again,” he said, his voice shaking, “You hear me, Alana? Never again, will I answer that question.”

“I’m sorry, Will. It was the only…”

He ignored her, heading for his waiting car, and when they pulled away he opened the tumbler to down the rest of the whiskey feeling buzzed just enough to drift off before home. Will didn’t remember getting to bed, but he woke up there hours later starving for pizza. He walked out into the hallway, wiping his eyes, and yawned.

“Aiden? Aiden, are you here? I need…”

No one seemed to be in the house, so he walked out into the backyard where his bodyguards Duncan and Markus both were smoking cigarettes.

“Hey,” he said, “Is Aiden not here?”

“The kid went to get you a pizza.”

Will smiled. “He knows me so well.”

He turned to head back inside before Markus called out to him.

“Will.”

Will looked at him. “Yeah?”

“Your cell has been ringing off the hook since you passed out, you might wanna look at it.”

He frowned. “Ok, thanks.”

Will headed back inside, unsure of where he’d left his phone, and found it plugged into an outlet in the kitchen. He picked it up, and saw that yes he did have a bunch of missed messages.

He looked at the first from Beverly Katz, one of his best friends and one time co-stars.

ARE YOU OK?

Will frowned.

WILL ANSWER ME!

WILL HE CALLED ME!

Will saw she'd called him almost ten times in the past few hours and didn't check the rest of the messages just called her back. She answered immediately.

"Oh my god, Will! Are you dying? I'm sure you're dying. Are you ok? Did he show up? There's all this talk online that you might've said something in your interview and someone told him so he…"

He wiped his eyes. "What are you talking about?"

Bev paused.

"Wait, you don't know?"

"Don't know what?"

She let out a long breath. "Hannibal broke it off with Bedelia."

Will almost dropped his phone.

Hannibal and Bedelia had been courting for almost a year, a relationship that started mere weeks after Alpha Mart premiered. He still remembered the headline LECTER IN LOVE and how he'd thrown up from how drunk he got that day.

"Will, are you there?"

He swallowed past the lump in his throat. “Are you sure?”

“Oh absolutely,” she said, “There was a moving van and everything, she’s out. Are you ok?”

Will walked over to his liquor cabinet and shakily poured himself some whiskey that he drank way too fast.

“I’m ok.”

Bev sighed. “I can come over.”

“No, no,” he said, “There’s probably reporters outside already, hoping to see me ‘call in’ friends to help me deal with this. No, don’t come. I’m fine. Aiden is getting me pizza.”

Bev laughed. “Ok. I…I mean…did that happen? Did you say something in the interview today with Natalie Warner?”

He ran a hand over his face and sighed. “Yeah, yeah I did. If that fuck somehow is stalking me…”

Bev sighed. “You’d love it if he was stalking you.”

“Shut up.”

“Will…”

The ring door alarm made some noise, and he heard Aiden call out, “I GOT PIZZA!”

“I gotta go, Bev. Pizza time.”

“I love you, Graham.”

“Love you too.”

He ended the call just as Aiden came into the room, his smile fading when he saw Will with a glass and the whiskey beside it.

“You heard.”

Will sighed. “Yeah.”

Aiden put the pizza down and opened the box, handing Will a slice of pepperoni that he ate fast.

“He’s apparently got people everywhere.”

Will glared at him as he swallowed, licking his lips. “So he’s stalking me?”

Aiden looked uncomfortable. “He…he’s probably been keeping an eye on you for a while.”

He felt his heart skip a beat. “He’s the one who broke it off, why…”

“I don’t know, Will,” Aiden said, coming to give him a side hug, “But he…he might show up.”

“I don’t want him to show up,” Will lied.

“Will…”

He pushed Aiden off, the alpha’s scent distressing suddenly, and he hated the omegan whine that wanted to come out of him.

Hannibal had been the one to tell him it wasn’t gonna work, breaking Will’s heart, and now he suddenly wanted to come back?

No fucking way.

Will finished his slice, and then took the whole box after Aiden grabbed a couple. He went outside to the backyard and let Winston out of his enclosure sitting by the pool. Winston jumped in, splashing Will as he laughed, and when he got out Will gave him some pizza crusts before he pet his head.

“Hey buddy.”

Winston had been his last gift from Hannibal, and despite how much he’d been crushed at their breakup he kept him.

He heard the noise of reporters further down his driveway, and groaned hating his life not for the first time.

Couldn’t they just leave him alone for a minute?

Will finished his pizza and went back in letting Winston dry off as he ran around. He went to put on swim trunks, and was headed back towards the sliding door to the backyard when a

voice made him freeze.

"You kept the door open."

He couldn't move.

Or breathe.

"I…I forgot to close it."

"Will…"

"Go," Will said, his voice shaking, "Go and lock the damn door, because you know that was a secret exit and entrance. You only knew because…because *we* were a secret. If you're back now because you heard I was still pining after you, you can fuck right off."

He could smell Hannibal, even from across the room, and ached to be near him.

This is why he'd avoided being anywhere Hannibal was for over a year.

This.

"Will, I…I've never stopped wanting you."

An omegan cry came out of Will and he grabbed the nearest thing he could - which happened to be an ugly as hell vase, throwing it at Hannibal's head narrowingly missing him.

“FUCK YOU!”

“Will…”

“You told me we wouldn’t work,” he whimpered, “You…you did this, not me. Get the hell out of here, NOW!”

Hannibal sighed, tears on his cheeks, and nodded, turning to go.

“You looked so happy,” he said, sniffling, “You…you looked so happy.”

Hannibal stopped walking but didn’t turn.

“That was how they told me to look.”

“What?”

Hannibal kept on walking, and Will was torn between chasing after him to find out what he meant or just letting him go.

He didn’t follow.

What did that mean?

Day 23: Plumber

The very worst thing that could ever happen to Dr. Hannibal Lecter happened at six twenty seven p.m. only an hour before he had guests arriving.

The downstairs toilet broke.

It was a surprise, the lack of flush when he stood, and the thought of calling someone so close to dinner was not a welcome one but what else was he supposed to do. He went downstairs to check the others, and had the same problem.

He started with the B's, Bill's Plumbing Service.

Bill himself answered, rather rudely really, and informed him he was not coming out past six on a Saturday night for something so simple as "a broken shitter."

So Hannibal went through the rest of the alphabet, from Carl's Fix It to just 'Fix It" all the way until he got to one that simply read, W.G. Plumbing. He called, tapping his foot, and was happy when the call was answered promptly.

"Hello?"

"Yes, hello," he started, "I seem to have a problem with my toilet. It's not…well it isn't doing anything when I flush, and I have guests coming so…"

"Did you try to wiggle it?"

Hannibal's eyes narrowed. "Yes. I've been told by several to 'wiggle it' and nothing. Is there any way…"

The man on the other end of the line sighed. “Yeah, I can come. What’s your address?”

He gave it, happy when that did not deter the plumber, and was told, ‘I’ll be there by seven.’

His doorbell rang at approximately seventy eleven, and Hannibal was livid before he even opened the door. He did not bother to look outside, knowing it could only be one person, and threw open the door ready to tear into the man on the other side.

But froze at the sight of him.

The man standing on his porch was quite possibly the most beautiful creature he’d ever seen in his entire life. He had porcelain skin, luscious hazel curls that framed his face, and eyes the color of the deepest depths of the ocean. Hannibal found it hard to breathe for a moment, overcome, and the man’s smile faded as the silence went on for far too long.

“Um…is everything ok? I’m at the right house, right?”

Hannibal shook himself out of his reverie and smiled. “Oh yes, I…I apologize. It’s been a trying few hours. Please, come in.”

The man walked past him inside, and Hannibal took note of the flannel half opened to show a thinner shirt underneath, and blue jeans that had several holes in them. He would never have allowed someone into his home in such attire on any other day, but the thought of not continuing to view this beautiful man was disheartening at best.

He closed the door as the man turned to look around his foyer.

“Wow.”

“I…the toilet is just outside the kitchen.”

The man blushed prettily, the pinkish hue spreading across his cheeks like a blooming flower, and Hannibal found it hard to look away as he began to walk ahead of him.

"You've got a nice place," he said, "I don't usually get calls in this neighborhood."

"Thank you," Hannibal said, "I called you because…no one else would help me."

"Ah," he said, "That figures."

He walked through the kitchen, though he could've taken a route through the dining room, and heard the man make more appreciative sounds as they viewed his most favorite room in the house.

"Oh wow," the man said, "This is…really nice."

"Thank you."

They found their way to the bathroom, his only downstairs one he'd allow for guests, and the man stepped inside ahead of him. "It just happened completely out of nowhere," he said, "I have guests and…they're coming very soon. I may have to cancel if…"

"Nah, it won't take long," he said, smiling at Hannibal and making his heart skip a beat, "I'm Will by the way."

Hannibal waited for a hand to be given but Will didn't, and such rudeness would've never been allowed but he instead put his own out in response. Will took it, looking flustered, and Hannibal shook his hand. The roughness of the skin on Will's hand sent titillations throughout his body, and he licked his lips as their eyes met.

“Dr. Hannibal Lecter,” he said, “It’s a pleasure to meet you, Will.”

Will blushed again and took his hand back, looking away. “I’ll get this fixed ASAP, ok?”

“Yes, I…appreciate your help.”

He reluctantly left, and found himself in the kitchen checking on the food but the time for dinner was so close he thought perhaps he’d have to cancel. The guests were not many, only five, and it would not take long.

Hannibal knew he could allow them to use his own facilities in the en suite connected to his bedroom, but the thought was not at all pleasant. He heard Will working, and had a sudden urge to take a look at him once more so he went back to cooking to take his mind off everything else.

Ten minutes passed.

Then twelve.

And Hannibal took out his phone to begin the calls.

Several of his guests were almost comically upset, even talking down to him, and he filed away their rudeness for later as he went through the list. He got to the last, Mrs. Komeda, and was in the midst of talking to her when he heard the toilet flush.

“...and then I said…”

“I apologize, Esmeralda, but I must cut our time short. The…worker…needs my assistance. I will call you with the postponed date for dinner.”

“Of course, I—-”

He hung up on her, no longer caring for decorum, and was just able to see Will standing up to wipe sweat off his brow as he entered the bathroom.

“I see things are going just fine?”

Will turned to smile at him. “Yeah, it was just a broken trip lever,” he said, “These fancy units always seem to conk out on ya after a few hundred flushes. It wasn’t much trouble, honestly.”

Hannibal smiled. “That’s…that’s very good. Though I…” his smile faded, “I was unsure of when you’d finish so I canceled my dinner guests this evening.”

Will’s smile faded. “Oh, I…I told you it wouldn’t take long.”

“Yes, you did, but I suppose it was an overreaction. It’s fine, I can use the food for myself this week.”

The awkward silence that hung between them was uncomfortable, and Hannibal had a sudden thought of inviting his repairman to dinner but the thought of rejection was not a welcome one.

“Well, I…I’m sorry.”

“It’s fine, Will, I cook things I like so honestly you helped me greatly.”

Will nodded, still looking upset, and Hannibal sighed.

“I will go get my checkbook to write out your fee,” he said, “Though you have not yet told me…”

“It’s on the house,” WIll said, surprising him enough that his eyes widened, “I mean you couldn’t have your party and all I…I feel bad I took so long to get here.”

“No, no, I…”

Will grabbed his toolbox, shaking his head, and Hannibal followed him down the hallway.

“I insist, Dr. Lecter,” he said, laughing, “You know, it’s not like I’m that put out. I like tinkering with things, and you didn’t pull me away from anything like a hot date. Honestly it’s fine.”

“I….if you’re certain.”

Will blushed again at the door, scratching his chin. “I am, I…it was nice to…”

“Would you like to stay for dinner?”

The question came out of him so suddenly even Hannibal was shocked, and he saw Will’s eyes widen in surprise.

“You’re, of course, under no obligation but there’s plenty of food and I wouldn’t want it to go to waste.”

That seemed the wrong thing to say as Will’s expression turned sour, and he laughed nervously.

“Nah, I…I gotta get home. I appreciate it, but…I gotta get home and feed my dogs. Sorry.”

Hannibal's chest ached. "I…don't apologize. I could box up some food for you, if you'd like? It's salmon, and…"

"I would, but…you know…the dogs."

"Yes."

Hannibal opened the door, looking away, and sighed as Will stepped out onto the porch.

"Have a good night, Dr. Lecter."

"You too, Will."

He watched him go, feeling terribly rejected, and saw Will's dented sedan pull away leaving him forever.

Hannibal got inside and sat at the dining room table, wallowing in self pity, before a sudden thought emerged.

He had several bathrooms, and also several sinks.

It wouldn't take much to make them slightly broken, and…Will would come to fix them in response.

Hannibal smiled.

Yes.

It seemed like a very good idea.

He finished making dinner, boxing up what he knew he wouldn't eat tonight, and sat alone having dinner with thoughts of a time when Will would be sitting across from him. They did not have much in common, at least on the surface, but there was just something about the brief time they'd spent together that made him want to know more.

Hannibal needed to know Will Graham.

And all it would take was a little broken plumbing to make that happen.

Day 24: Crime

Will couldn't see or hear a damn thing, but he didn't have to do either to know he was in trouble.

The men who'd grabbed him were too good, way too organized, and that could only mean one thing.

Hannibal Lecter was going to kill him.

He let out a long breath, trying to calm down, and wished like hell he'd taken his suppressants today. The last job had gone so well, not one problem, and there hadn't been any pushback. Not even a little.

Even Nigel patted him on the back for *"fucking over that asshole."*

Will wanted to struggle but knew if he wanted to appeal to Lecter's instincts he'd have to break.

He'd have to look weak.

The sound of footsteps got closer suddenly, and Will listened for more than one but no.

It was just the one.

He could smell alpha, so strong it had to be a thoroughbred, and Will might have been on suppressants when he broke into Lecter's home weeks ago but he still remembered the scent.

“Hello, Mr. Graham.”

Will whimpered, trying to sound scared, and it wasn’t hard. He *was* scared. He struggled a little, but didn’t go too hard, and smelled Lecter lean in close enough to scent him.

“You’re not scared.”

“I….”

He pulled off the black cover they’d put over Will’s head, making him wince, and Will had only ever seen Hannibal Lecter from far across a parking lot a few dozen times but he was a lot better looking up close.

Will couldn’t hold in his sudden slick, wiggling uncomfortably when Lecter touched his cheek, and his lip curled.

“Don’t….don’t I look scared?”

“No,” Lecter said, smiling now, “You look uncomfortable, possibly hating that I can smell your attraction to me, and you also look as if you’re angry. Are you angry, Will?”

Will glared at him. “It’s been almost a month,” he hissed, watching Lecter’s eyes flash red, “Why did you wait so long?”

He put his hand on Will’s other cheek and was so close Will could feel breath across his lips.

“I had to be sure.”

“Sure of what?”

Will shivered when he ran a thumb across his lips, and when he whimpered this time it wasn't on purpose. He felt warm all over, too warm, and his vision turned yellow as the alpha he thought wanted to kill him instead began scenting his cheek.

"What are…you…."

"I smelled you," he whispered, practically purring, "All over my home I smelled you. It was faint, but there, and now…you have apparently not taken your suppressants because I *know* at last it's you."

"What did I…"

Lecter pulled back, eyes still red, and grabbed Will's cheeks harder as he spoke.

"You're my mate, Will," he said.

Will laughed, his voice shaking. "What? I'm not…you're insane! I…I was in your house, I…"

He leaned in suddenly and sucked on Will's mating gland, making him cry out as a gush of slick came. Will hadn't had a heat in years but suddenly he was sure this was one.

Wasn't it?

" *Mine,* " Lecter growled, "You're mine, sweet Will. All mine."

"I…."

“Don’t try to fight it,” he whispered, kissing Will’s neck and making him whimper, “I don’t plan on letting you go, not now, not ever.”

Tears filled Will’s eyes.

This couldn’t be happening.

No damn way.

Will tried to fight his instincts that were clawing at him from the inside, desperate to be taken, and moaned. He tried to remember his crew: Nigel, Roberto, Duncan, and even Bobby, but it all started to become a haze when Hannibal teased a bite to his skin, making him purr.

“Yes, that’s it,” Hannibal whispered, “Don’t fight it, sweet Will. There’s no reason to fight. Not when I plan on making you feel *so good.* ”

His vision was a yellow haze when Hannibal pulled back, smiling with his eyes still red, and Will felt a tear fall down his cheek.

“Mine.”

He touched Will’s cheek.

“Always and forever.”

Hannibal untied his hands, then his legs, and Will couldn’t help but throw himself at him. He held him tight, and the fire that seemed to be building inside him became an inferno. Will rutted against him, shaking, and Hannibal pulled back to touch his face.

“Not here, sweet Will,” he said, “Not here.”

He whimpered. “Alpha…”

Hannibal lifted him with ease, so strong, and Will clung to his neck licking all over as his delirium worsened. He didn’t know anything but need, and he ached from how empty he was.

But as his alpha carried him he knew his agony would end soon.

This was his alpha.

He’d make it all go away.

Day 25: Eldritch Horror

Note: So, I wrote this because I've wanted to add onto the "Chomp" AU for a really long time and this was an opportunity to do just that so this will be cross posted as Chapter Two of Chomp as well.

—

Will didn't expect Hannibal to really show up the next night, though he still dressed for dinner, and though the dogs still wouldn't come near him even after many showers he let them out for the night. He sighed, sitting on a patio chair, and looked up at the stars twinkling so bright.

Star light, star bright, first star….

"I see tonight."

He jumped, surprised when Hannibal just appeared out of nowhere leaning on his elbow as he stared at Will with a smile.

"Shit! You…you scared me."

Hannibal's smile faded. "I apologize," he said, "I didn't mean to, I was just very excited to come retrieve you for dinner."

Will blushed, scratching his cheek, and winced when he lost a fingernail.

"It's nothing I…wait," he looked up, "You read my mind."

Hannibal looked even more upset now. "I'm sorry," he said, taking Will's hand as he knelt down beside him, "It was hard to avoid when all I've thought of the last nineteen hours is you. Please forgive me, Will. I didn't mean to…"

Will laughed nervously and moved his hand away. “It’s fine,” he said, “You…you can get up. It’s…it’s no big deal ok?”

He watched Hannibal’s face light up as he smiled, and his pointy teeth that wouldn’t be attractive even on any other vampire were almost *too* attractive to Will. He tried to keep his cock from falling off again, putting his hand there, and before he could stand Hannibal put a hand over his.

“Your penis is not in danger of falling off,” he said seriously, making Will blush harder, “I’ve made sure of it.”

“You…”

Hannibal’s eyes suddenly went black. “I…I have immense power, Will. It was no problem at all for me to do that for you.”

Will’s mouth felt dry. “Oh, that’s…thanks.”

He smiled. “You’re welcome.”

Hannibal had yet to sit up so Will moved his own hand, and Hannibal instead of letting go entwined their fingers.

“You’re nervous.”

“A little,” Will admitted, “This is new for me.”

“For me as well,” Hannibal said, “I…I have never felt any such connection to another living being, not in….a very long time.”

“How long?”

His eyes became normal now, like before, and Will’s heart skipped a beat when he tapped his mouth with a finger like he had to think.

“Hmm….I believe….perhaps….a millennia?”

Will blinked. “A….a thousand years?”

Hannibal frowned. “Yes, that is what a millennia consists of.”

He let out a long breath. “Hannibal, what…what are you?”

Hannibal let go of his hand and stood, looking upset as he walked across Will’s porch. The dogs, Will realized, were all in the furthest corner of the yard huddled together as they stared at him.

What type of monster had he let into his life?

Hannibal sighed, and Will watched a black tentacle come out of his side rubbing against his arm then another joined it. He was confused for a moment until he realized why.

Hannibal was self-soothing.

“Hannibal, I didn’t….you don’t scare me, ok? You…I just was curious that’s all. I…”

He got up and walked toward him just as another tentacle came out blocking him from getting closer.

“The old gods, abominations, never quite accepted my family. They….they did not see me as an equal and…I….I took over the monsters because they did not know why they feared me. They’ve never not feared me, going through the motions of respect while they want to flee my parties full of blood, guts, and horrors beyond imagination. I’ve never known anything but fear since my family was obliterated and I…I had to retaliate,” he looked at Will, his face distorted now with his true form a green demonlike appearance Will found hard to look away from, and when his tongue came out so long Will could’ve touched it even from across the patio he knew he should’ve screamed.

But he didn’t.

“What did you do?”

Hannibal’s eyes were black as he smiled, teeth even bigger now. “I ate them.”

Will licked his lips. “All of them?”

“Yes.”

He felt his cock twitch. “That’s…you’re that powerful?”

Hannibal frowned, though his mouth didn’t quite look the same it was obvious, and cocked his head.

“You’re not afraid.”

“No,” he said, voice shaking, “I…I’m just….intimidated.”

Another four tentacles came out at once, the first holding Will letting go as the others wrapped around him. He was pulled across the porch so fast he was dizzy, and Hannibal reached out with a clawlike hand to touch his face.

"And now?"

Will sighed. "I….I'm not afraid."

"Everyone is afraid."

He nuzzled Hannibal's hand. "Not me."

"Will…."

"I know I'm….nothing," Will said, tears in his eyes, "I know I'm just…a useless zombie and you know I'm attracted to you. I know you know that now. I…I'd be *honored* to just be your friend. Someone you trusted. Hell," he laughed, a tear falling down his cheek, "I'd be honored to be your next meal."

Hannibal's extra-long tongue wrapped around his neck, the feel of it making Will moan, before he pulled it back, growling. "I'd never disrespect you by eating you, Will. Never."

"Hannibal…"

He pressed their foreheads together, and Will's mind flashed with a million pictures that he didn't quite understand but still brought tears to his eyes.

"I have all the power in the world," Hannibal whispered, "All the knowledge, all of the universe is at my command…and all I want…is…"

Will let out a sob. “Please.”

He was shocked when instead of giving him what he wanted Hannibal was suddenly gone, dropping him onto the porch, and he looked around in shock.

“Hannibal? HANNIBAL COME BACK! I…shit. Shit, shit, SHIT!”

Will hit the porch hard, expecting his hand to fall off, and instead stared wide eyed as he saw something he’d never seen before.

Blood.

He was bleeding.

“What the fuck?” he gasped, touching the blood as it fell down his hand.

Will didn’t bleed.

He was barely alive.

What had Hannibal done to him?

Day 26: Lighthouse

As the saying always goes, you can't go home again.

But to Will, it went a little differently.

He didn't *want* to go home again.

Yet, as he pulled into Wolf Trap and saw the quaint little town he'd long since run away from he ignored the instant fear that came over him. He watched the people laughing and smiling as he passed them by and had to look away as tears came to his eyes.

It's not for you.

His father's words echoed in his head as he drove towards the house he'd grown up in until he'd turned eighteen and had tears falling down his cheeks when he parked in the driveway. The house looked like shit, really bad, and it gave him a deep satisfaction that without his *helper* Dad hadn't been able to keep up the place. Will let out a long breath before he got out, and walked towards the door but a voice made him pause.

"Willy? Is that you?"

Will turned and saw the neighbor, Mrs. Shoemaker coming out of her house wearing an apron and a frown. He forced himself to smile as he met her halfway, and she awkwardly put her hands on his shoulders.

"You're all grown up," she said, her voice shaking, "Just look at how handsome you are."

He sighed. "Thanks, I…my Dad…"

“Bill? Oh, he’s at the lighthouse, honey. You know how he is.”

Will frowned.

“The… *lighthouse?* ”

Mrs. Shoemaker nodded, as if Will knew exactly what she was talking about. “You know it’s his job, Willie,” she said, “Even in his old age, he…well…”

“He’s sixty-four years old,” Will said, “He…the doctor called and told me he was in bed barely able to move.”

She frowned. “What? No, no, he’s been fine. I don’t know what Doctor would tell you that.”

Will stepped back. “Are you kidding me? I…I drove hours to get here, I…I packed all my stuff.”

“I’m sorry, Willie…”

“It’s *Will,* ” he said, “Not Willie.”

“Oh, I…I apologize. I just remember your Dad always called you…”

“Yeah, well I haven’t seen my Dad in almost twenty years. He doesn’t call me anything anymore.”

Mrs. Shoemaker paled. “I…I’m sorry, Will. The lighthouse…”

“And *that,* ” he said, shaking his head as he laughed, “Since when does *Wolf Trap* have a lighthouse? We never…”

“Since *always,* Honey,” she said, backing away, “Maybe you don’t remember cuz it’s been so long, but Wolf Trap always had a lighthouse.”

Will wanted to argue with her, but he could see in her eyes that she thought what she said was the truth. He got a chill suddenly, and it was odd since the weather was almost ninety.

“Oh, well…um….maybe I did. I….where is it?”

“It’s by the water, Will,” she said, “You’ll find it.”

Will watched her almost run into her house and sighed, rubbing his eyes. He got back in his car and pulled away both creeped out and exhausted as he drove towards the water.

The water Wolf Trap never had.

He got there in minutes, which again was so insane he almost turned around to head back home, but something drew him to want to know more. The lighthouse came into view instantly as he got close, and he found nowhere he park other than a block away, but the walk gave him time to think.

How could a lighthouse just *appear* in the middle of nowhere?

And why here?

Why now?

Will saw his father when he got just steps away, and when he called out, “BILL!” he got no response. He was staring at the water, lost in thought, and Will finally called out, “DAD!” which made him turn.

The look on his face made Will stop walking.

He’d seen his father look many different ways over the years: angry, annoyed, murderous, broken, and even once or twice amused. But never once did he see him look the way he did now.

Bill Graham looked *terrified.*

Will again had an urge to run, get back in his car and drive home, but something pulled him closer. His father backed up when Will got to him, and he didn’t hug him or even smile, especially at the greeting he got.

“What in the hell are you doing here, Willie?”

He sighed. “It’s Will,” he said, “And I’m here because your Doctor called me and said you were almost dying. Now I see you walkin’ around just fine. What the hell is going on?”

Bill Graham’s eyes widened. “Doctor?”

“Yeah,” he said, taking out his phone to see where he’d typed in the notes.

“He said his name was…Doctor Hannibal…”

“Lecter,” Bill finished, his voice shaking, “He said Lecter?”

Will looked up. “Yeah.”

Bill rushed forward and grabbed Will’s arm turning him around. “You gotta go now,” he said, his voice almost a growl, “I ain’t sick and I don’t need no…”

A loud cry, almost like a bird but also not at all, rang out making his father stop.

Will pushed him back, confused, and saw a strange expressionless stare coming from his father.

“D…Dad?”

He waved his hand in Bill Graham’s face and got no response.

Will looked around, confused, and before he could run towards the nearest business, he heard someone scream. He turned, and to his shock his father was running towards the water.

“Dad! Dad stop!”

His father sped up, and several people suddenly seemed *everywhere.* A blonde man ran up to stop his Dad, but was pushed back, and WIll watched in horror as Bill Graham jumped into the water.

Will had never seen his father swim, not once in eighteen years, and they’d also never gone to a pool. He didn’t even know if his father *could* swim. He didn’t hesitate to go after him, though he knew he should, and suddenly waves started in the water.

He was in tears as he went down, looking around in confusion, and there was no sign other than the waves.

“DAD!”

Will dove under again, shaking, and went deeper swimming through even though his chest ached the longer he stayed. He saw nothing, not one damn thing, and rushed to get to the surface when suddenly something grabbed his leg. He could hardly see, the water seemed so cloudy, and struggled to get loose as he couldn’t breathe.

He didn’t remember getting to shore, but when his eyes opened several people were clapping and a man stared down at him with dark brown eyes. The man smiled, and for a minute Will was sure he was wrong because his eyes didn’t look brown anymore.

They looked red.

“Are you alright?” he asked, his voice accented.

“Y…yeah,” Will said, his voice hoarse as he sat up, “I…my Dad.”

The man’s face fell.

“I…I’m sorry.”

Will shook his head. “He…he could still be out there, he…”

The man turned and Will saw a covered blanket down the shore with an obvious body beneath. Tears filled his eyes, and despite how terrified Ben Graham had made him his entire life he let out a sob.

“He’s dead.”

“Yes, I…I have to…I don’t wish to make this about myself, but I am the one who brought you home.”

Will turned to look at him.

“Dr. Lecter?”

Dr. Lecter nodded, looking sheepish. “Your father has had some serious health issues over the years, and he’s been struggling. I…I apologize for the subterfuge. I was very close to Bill.”

Will wiped his eyes. “I…he said he didn’t have a Doctor.”

Dr. Lecter smiled sadly. “Your father was very stubborn.”

“But the light…”

Will turned, confused when he saw they were alone. He’d distinctly heard clapping when he opened his eyes.

“Where is everyone?”

“Everyone?”

He looked at Dr. Lecter. “Yeah, I heard clapping, I…I know I did.”

Dr. Lecter shook his head. “No one is here, Will,” he said, “Just you and I. I saw you struggling in the water and…rescued you.”

Will noticed for the first time his suit looked wet, and it was odd because he hadn't seen even seen it look that way before.

Apparently, he was hearing things and *not* seeing things.

"I feel like I'm going crazy," he said, his voice shaking, "I…I can't…"

Dr. Lecter stood up and held out his hand for Will to take. He took it and felt an odd tingle when their hands touched. He felt for a moment like he was back in the water, and Dr. Lecter's skin seemed to shimmer in the sunlight.

Then it didn't.

He hummed, and Will felt all the pain go away.

"Better?"

"Y…yeah, I…wait, my Dad…"

"The police are taking the body to the morgue."

Will turned, confused, and now saw a half dozen policeman loading his father's body onto a stretcher. He felt lightheaded, shaking his head. "No, we were alone. You said…"

Dr. Lecter put his arm around Will and led him to the grass where they sat together.

"You're in shock," he said, rubbing his back, "Just breathe."

Will let out several breaths and looked at him again. “I’m so lost I…I don’t think I should’ve come home.”

Dr. Lecter patted his shoulder. “I know it feels overwhelming right now, but…perhaps your purpose here was not to help your father but rather…yourself.”

He felt oddly dizzy as he stared at the man beside him, his voice making Will warm all over.

“I…I feel so lost. I came here, thinking he might die and now that he *is* dead I…I feel worse than I thought I could about someone who was such a…”

“Monster?” Dr. Lecter finished, frowning, “Your father was…a hard man to know, I….I would say I am sorry for your loss but…perhaps I should not.”

Tears filled his eyes. “I…”

“Come,” Dr. Lecter said, leading Will away as the ambulance closed its doors, “I will drive you to the hospital.”

“Do I need to go? I…I mean…you saw him, right? Do I need to see him?”

Dr. Lecter paused, as if contemplating his question, and then shook his head. “No, I suppose not. Do you need me to drive you to your hotel?”

“I just got here, I…I expected to stay at my old house. Maybe I should just go h….”

Dr. Lecter put his hand on Will’s shoulder again, fingers brushing the skin, and Will looked at him. He noticed for the first time how attractive the man was, almost like a model, and even

with the wet suit that quickly seemed to be drying he seemed almost unreal. Will blushed, his throat feeling dry, and sighed.

"I…I think I just wanna go to…the house," he said, feeling super tired, "My dad's…or…I mean…"

"Yes," Dr. Lecter said, smiling sadly as his brown eyes again looked red in the sunlight, "I'll take you home, Will. I'll…take care of you."

Will felt like he was walking on a cloud as he was led to Dr. Lecter's car, and when he was strapped inside he was already closing his eyes when they pulled onto the road.

He fell asleep so fast he didn't hear Hannibal's whisper.

"You're home now, Will. Just as you should be."

Day 27: Fantastic Creatures

Every second Tuesday evening of every month Hannibal Lecter went to one of his favorite places.

The Night Market.

It was a private event, magical beings only, and was littered with wares from various witches and mages. He'd fill his reserves, form bonds with some allies, and be on his way. There was never much deep meaning in his visits, and even the close acquaintances he saw every month were of little importance to him.

What was of the most importance was why he'd come this evening.

He'd gotten a call from Beverly Katz, who dealt in magical creatures, and been in his car before she'd even finished her sentence.

I think I've found a familiar for you.

The words alone made his heart skip a beat, sparks coming out of his hands, and as he drove the anticipation was palpable.

A familiar.

Could it be he'd finally have someone to share his life and magic with?

He had tears in his eyes at the thought, trying to calm down so he would not scare away his possible match before he'd even gotten the chance to see if they were compatible. The probability was low, as he'd waited for nearly a hundred years, and as he pulled into the Night Market he began to have his doubts.

Why would this time be any different?

The sheer number of familiar types he'd attempted to connect to had been vast: felines, birds, bats, mice, cats, and even at one point a raccoon. Not one of them had been a match for him, some even getting injuries in the process, and he'd tried not to get his hopes up.

Why did Beverly think to excite him tonight?

He exited his Bentley, putting a lock charm over the vehicle as he left, and headed for the Night Market. It was hard to spot, if you weren't looking, a silhouette you might otherwise not notice if it didn't want you to see, but once you got inside you were welcomed.

Hannibal was *always* welcomed.

He spotted several vendors he'd worked with often, nodding to a few, and fellow supernatural creatures he knew in passing gave him the same courtesy. It was calm here, serene, and he would have been happy to be back still even without Beverly's declaration. Her shop had no name, just a *feeling* , and either welcomed you or it didn't just as the Night Market did.

Hannibal put his hand through the door and felt a tingle, smiling as he stepped inside.

He heard a loud meowing the minute he did, wincing as he covered his ears, and the charm that came naturally muted out the noise.

Beverly herself appeared then, looking worse for wear, and her lips were silent before he removed the charm on her alone.

"...and I just thought she *felt* like yours, but she hasn't even shut up since they brought her in. I even let her unshift but she keeps going back and…"

Hannibal's chest tightened.

"That…feline…is the familiar you mentioned?"

Her face fell.

"Oh no," she said, "You…you don't…"

Hannibal looked away, trying not to show his upset. "The sound of that…cat….made my skin crawl I had to put a charm on the noise immediately."

"Hannibal…"

He sighed and tried to smile. "It's just as well," he said, "I'd rather not *buy* my forever companion."

"I mean, they all volunteer so it's not…."

Hannibal shook his head. "It's fine, Beverly," he said, "I…I think I'll peruse the market and perhaps return for tea time with you later?"

Beverly nodded, still looking grim. "Of course."

He left her shop fast, his disappointment making his magic feel erratic, and headed for some ingredients for a spell he wanted to perform on a particularly irksome man who'd given him a middle finger on the road just days ago. The minute he got a few steps he was taken by surprise when a wolf ran out of Eldon Stammets' shop with a bag in its mouth. The sharp recognition made Hannibal freeze, unable to move, and Stammets himself ran out wand in hand yelling after it.

“GET BACK HERE YOU MANGY MUTT! I KNOW WHAT YOU…”

Hannibal’s anger came unbidden and he threw out a curse, hitting Eldon in the back and knocking him over as the wolf froze.

“DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS MINE!”

Mr. Stammets was frozen on the dirt road, eyes wide, and Hannibal stalked over to him ready to strike.

“ *DON’T!”*

He froze, looking up, and saw for the first time his familiar.

The wolf had become a young man with a swollen eye and quite dirty curly brown hair.

Hannibal walked to him, tears in his eyes, and held out his hand.

“Hello.”

The wolf’s eyes, so blue they seemed unreal, were wide.

“I was only taking it because my father…he….he needs it.”

Hannibal leaned down to pick up the fallen bag and looked inside. There were very significant ingredients there, a known intoxicant, and when he looked up Hannibal’s anger was no longer for Mr. Stammets.

“He made you steal this?”

“I…he…”

“Does he force you to make the potion as well?”

The young wolf’s eyes filled with tears. “Dad doesn’t have powers, he…”

Hannibal pulled his wolf to him, not caring if he scared him, and the whimper he got in return made him feel bad for a moment before he put his hand to the young wolf’s face. The spark between them ignited, and he knew his familiar’s name.

“Will.”

Will smiled, still seeming a bit frightened. “Hannibal.”

“You’re my familiar,” he said, ignoring the eyes on them, “Do you know what that means?”

He let out a long breath as Hannibal took his hand, their sparks connecting at once, and the feeling brought tears to Hannibal’s eyes.

“Yes,” Will said, “I…I get to live with you and…we share magic.”

“Yes,” he said, “You’re my companion now, and anyone who dares to think they can harm you will answer to my wrath.”

Will looked at Mr. Stammets. “Like him?”

“Yes.”

“Is he dead?”

“No.”

Will looked around, stepping closer to Hannibal by instinct, and his fear was obvious.

“They don’t like me here.”

“Then we shall go elsewhere.”

He held out his hand for Will to take and there was no hesitation in the young man’s trust. The feel of their hands connecting again made Hannibal’s whole being settle, and he led Will out of the Night Market glaring at everyone who passed.

The urge to pull Will closer had him on edge, and when he heard Stammets yell out he froze.

“GET….HERE…..MUTT….!”

Hannibal felt Will squeeze his hand and he looked at the young wolf whose eyes glowed yellow.

“Don’t kill him.”

He turned just as Eldon appeared near them, wand at the ready, and did not bother with his own.

“You would kill a poor defenseless young man for some stolen goods already returned?”

Stammets looked still confused from the curse, hardly able to walk, and his red cheeks showed his body was still fighting Hannibal’s curse. Hannibal put his hand on Eldon’s face, making him shake, and forced the other mage to look into his eyes.

You will not die now but you will be dead by morning. Go now and enjoy your last hours alive.

The curse suddenly lifted and Eldon’s sudden tears gave Hannibal immense joy as the man opened his mouth to yell and no sound came out. Stammets’ eyes widened in terror.

“Hannibal?”

He turned to see Will looking fearful, his yellow eyes wide, and nothing else mattered by his comfort. Hannibal walked away from Mr. Stammets and put his hand on Will’s shoulder.

“Let’s go home.”

Hannibal knew he would not return to the Night Market, which was a loss, but as he felt his magic flow through Will he cared much less.

He would not be alone anymore.

Not ever again.

Day 28: Royalty

Will never knew his mother.

The only thing his father said about her was that she'd left them when Will was barely able to walk, and though he'd never seen a single picture of her Dad always made sure to tell him he 'had her eyes' if he got drunk enough.

He thought about her sometimes, late at night when he was alone in the dark, and wondered if she was happy.

It took thirty two years for Will to find out exactly who she was.

Queen Helena Freisciolo

The last living monarch of Courbone, a small country just south of Lithuania.

The letter came weeks after her death, handwritten, and Will had tears in his eyes as he read his only communication he'd ever get from his mother's hand.

Dear Will,

Words cannot express my pain as I write this for what feels like the final time I'll hold a pen. A day has not gone by when I didn't think of you, ache for you, and devour all I could from so far away. I know I cannot take back my mistake, even if I wish it so, and as I'm struggling now to continue I will leave you with my biggest regret.

I did not want this life for you.

They will come soon.

Do not let them force you to rule.

Run.

Your loving mother,

Queen Helena Freisciolo

Will wiped his eyes, confused, and stared at his pack.

Run?

Why would he run?

What did she mean?

He set the letter down, still shaking, and whistled for the dogs just as a knock came to his door.

It was rare he ever got visitors at all, unless it was Jack asking for a case, and despite his mother's warning Will walked to peek outside. A man stood there, his face a bit of a blur, and Will knew he shouldn't open the door but did anyway.

"Who are you?"

The man was dressed to the nines in an immaculate navy suit with a colorful tie, his hair slicked back, and his smile made Will's stomach flutter.

“I’m here to bring you home, Prince Will.”

Will froze.

“I’m not a prince.”

The man’s smile widened. “I beg to differ,” he said, his accent making Will oddly flushed, “You are the only son and heir of our late Queen Helena. I’d know those eyes anywhere.”

Will remembered his mother’s warning.

Run.

But found he couldn’t.

“Who are you?” he asked again, his voice shaking.

The man held out his hand, though Will had yet to open the door fully.

“Hannibal Lecter,” he said.

“No,” Will said, “Who *are you* ? Why did they send *you* ?”

Hannibal sighed.

“Please open the door, Will.”

“Not until you tell me why you’re the one they sent. Are you a relative? The law of wherever the fuck my mom was Queen? Who…”

Hannibal put his hand on the door, dangerously close to Will’s own, and leaned in close enough for Will to smell his cologne.

“I am your betrothed,” he said, his voice shaking, “And I’ve waited for you for a very long time. I requested to be able to bring you home, I….please open the door so I can see you.”

Will blinked.

“Betrothed? As in….”

“Your husband and King Consort to be, yes.”

Will let out a long breath.

“And if I refuse to let you in? If I….refuse to leave?”

Hannibal’s smile faded. “I cannot force you.”

“And you’ll….”

“I won’t go, if that’s what you’re asking,” he whispered, “I have waited to meet my betrothed since I was a young boy, I….I waited every year since I could remember for the Queen to give an heir never knowing there already was one. I….I’ve waited for you for a lifetime, Will. I can wait as long as I have to.”

Will's heart skipped a beat.

"That sounds like you're forcing me."

"Never."

"I…."

Hannibal's fingers brushed his and he shivered. "Open the door, Will. Please?"

His mother's warning seemed to fade as he looked into Hannibal's eyes.

No one had ever looked at him like that before.

Not ever.

Run.

What if he didn't want to run?

What if….he wanted to run away with the stranger on his porch?

Will blushed.

"I'll open the door if you promise not to…force me anywhere."

“I promise.”

He opened the door, shaking, and when Hannibal saw him full he gasped. Will stared at him as well, unable to stop, and his stomach clenched as Hannibal just stared not saying a word.

“There,” he said, tears stinging his eyes, “Now you’ve seen me fully so you can go home and tell the….royal club or whatever that you don’t want me and they can pick another…”

Hannibal fell to his knees, grabbing Will’s left hand, and before Will could even finish he pulled out a ring. It was silver, covered in diamonds, and fit him perfectly.

“I want no other,” Hannibal said, tears in his eyes, “No other. You…you’re exquisite. I…you take my breath away, I cannot….how can you even think I wouldn’t want you for all of eternity?”

Will’s eyes widened.

Run.

He stared down at Hannibal as the dogs started to bark, and shivered as Hannibal entwined their fingers.

“I….”

Hannibal kissed his hand and then looked up again with tears falling down his cheeks.

“Say you’ll come home, Will. Please. Please come home, I….I cannot leave with you now. I apologize for taking back my promise, I just….I’m overwhelmed. Please be mine. I cannot fathom the thought of being without you.”

Will let out a long breath.

This was insane.

Crazy, maybe.

But when was the last time someone told him he was sane?

He looked into Hannibal's eyes.

"Ok."

The joy that spread over Hannibal's face made Will smile back, and he stood up pulling Will into a hug. He smelled like the ocean, the forest, and money.

He smelled like money.

"At last," he whispered, "You're coming home. I…I promise I'll do everything I can to make you happy, Will."

Will had tears in his eyes.

He believed him.

Why did he believe him when his mother had given him such a dire warning?

This might be a mistake.

But there was no turning back now.

Hannibal pulled back, touching his cheek, and Will blushed.

“I believe you,” he said, his voice shaking, “I…I believe you.”

Hannibal smiled.

“You’ll make a perfect King.”

Will felt more tears fall down his cheeks.

No, he wouldn’t.

But that didn’t mean he was going to turn back now. He was about to potentially ruin his life because a good looking stranger professed his undying devotion to him.

Maybe he really was crazy.

But he wouldn’t be alone anymore.

Day 29: Dark

There was one rule Will Graham followed for his entire life.

Always keep a light on.

It was drilled into him for as long as he could remember, a reminder his father always made sure to bring up if he left the house after dark, or every night when he went to bed. The dark was not a safe place, never would be, and it took him till he was in high school to realize that no one else had that same rule.

His fear the first time he was thrown into a closet at a middle school party was quickly abated by his emergency light, making the girl across from him laugh and call him a “loser” when he refused to turn it off. The incident quickly spread, making Will a pariah, and despite thinking his father was crazy Will kept his lights on all throughout high school.

Then the morning of his graduation he woke up to his father dead in the armchair by the TV. Will called the ambulance and the school that promised they’d keep his diploma for when he was ready.

Will turned on all the lights on at the house that night and thought about his father’s rule.

What was so wrong about the dark?

Had his father just been crazy?

He had tears in his eyes as he stood, walking down the hallway, and remembered his classmates taunting him.

“LOSER!”

“Scared of the dark, Willie boy?”

“What a baby!”

Will let out a sob, running down the hall, and began to knock over the lamps. The crash made him feel worse as the lights went out, and he found he couldn’t stop. He went to get his father’s hammer and knocked out every lightbulb he could find, hating his father for leaving him and also for making his life so much worse.

He left his bedroom for last, sobbing, and hit every light he could find until the only one left was his emergency flashlight. Will smashed it on the ground, plunging the room in darkness, and fell to his knees curling up as he started to choke on the force of his grief.

“FUCK YOU! FUCK YOU! FUCK….”

Something grabbed his arm from under the bed and he screamed backing away as he heard scrapping on the wood floor.

“Will…..”

“No, no, no, no….”

Will tried to stand but the same monster grabbed his leg, pulling him down, and he screamed again as he was dragged.

“HELP ME! SOMEONE HELP ME!”

The monster in the dark held him tight, the weight of it at his back, and he whimpered as he felt a long tongue run down his cheek.

“I’ve been waiting for you.”

“Please,” he whimpered, “Pl….”

A sudden bite to his neck made Will let out a desperate cry, and his eyes felt heavy as he struggled against the monster’s hold.

“This is going to hurt but…I’ve waited for far too long and I cannot wait anymore.”

Will felt a sudden pain, his voice suddenly hoarse from the force of his screams, and it felt like he was burning from the inside.

“Mine.”

The last thing he thought of before he passed out was his father’s warning and wondered just how his father had known what waited for him in the dark.

He should’ve listened.

It was too late now.

Day 30: Afterlife

Chapter Summary

TW: character death & the only one of these actually written in the show's universe

Will didn't remember dying.

He remembered the fall, Hannibal holding him tight as they hit the water, and the last words they said to each other.

"I do love you."

"I know."

Will woke up on the beach without even a single ache, and completely alone.

"HANNIBAL!" he called out, his voice echoing down the shore.

He got no answer, even after hours of yelling, and finally forced himself to leave. There were houses nearby, plenty of them, and it wouldn't take much to break into one. Will got halfway up to the road as he spotted someone coming near him, and froze waiting for them to yell at how he looked.

But the couple walked right through him.

Completely through him.

Will looked down at his body, eyes wide, and lifted his hands.

"Oh."

He heard the woman scream and turned back to see his dead body on the sand. The woman ran to her boyfriend, sobbing, and Will had tears in his eyes as he walked over to look down at himself.

The blood loss was what got him, he was sure, though the waves themselves had done him no favors. He had bruises, his skin bloated, and as he knelt down he was almost glad Hannibal wasn't here.

He didn't need to see him like this.

Will found it hard to stay, walking through the couple again, and looked out at the water.

Hannibal might have been taken further down the shore, or maybe he'd had help. But he wasn't here.

He sighed and left his body with the strangers, heading down the shore, and had a thought that made him smile.

It's beautiful.

Tears filled his eyes again as he struggled to keep going, wondering if this truly was hell, and finally sat in the sand where he covered his face with his hands. He cried for everything that happened in the past, the future he'd miss, and for Hannibal.

He cried for Hannibal.

Will didn't know how long he sat there, letting go of it all, but when he heard his name he froze.

"Will."

He looked up and there, covered in blood, was Hannibal.

Will didn't move, hoping Hannibal didn't see him, but he knew he had.

"No," he said, shaking his head, "No, no, no…"

Hannibal ran to him, falling to the sand, and wrapped his arms around Will tight. He didn't go through him, and Will wanted to push him away even as he pulled him closer.

"I thought I lost you," he whispered, his voice shaking, "I...I thought….perhaps…this was my punishment."

Will pulled back, sniffling, and touched his cheek.

"Maybe it's both of ours," he said, "I…I hoped you didn't see me just now that you were still alive and now…fuck, I'm glad you're here. Is that terrible to say?"

Hannibal smiled. "No, Will," he whispered, "If I have to be stuck drifting through life as a spirit…I'd much rather it be by your side."

Will smiled and leaned in to touch his cheek. "You look like shit."

Hannibal smiled. "You look beautiful."

"Hannib—"

Hannibal kissed him then, their lips barely brushing, and when they parted Will wished like hell he'd kissed him sooner.

"You kissed me."

He touched Will's lips with his finger, still smiling. "I'm dead, Will," he said, "There was no danger of you attempting to kill me for it, so I thought I would take a chance."

Will smiled again and kissed him harder this time, feeling like they were melting into one person.

He felt more alive now as a ghost than he ever had actually living.

The thought of forever like this wasn't a bad one.

Not if they had each other.

Day 31: Two of the Above - Immortals Royalty

He shouldn't be here.

Will stood in the corner of the ballroom, heart beating wildly in his chest, and watched the others titter around him as the anticipation of the guest of honor's arrival grew. He had not spoken to a single soul, mask covering his face, and the stolen clothes that covered his person felt as if they would give him away at any moment.

The Prince's promise had gone out to every regal and rich family in the kingdom, asking for unmarrieds to join him for an event. The news spread like wildfire until everyone knew, even lowly peasants like Will himself, and as he watched more and more come in to get their garments made and mended his jealousy got the better of him.

One of his clients, Duke Chilton, had come in to get his order and declared it "unfit and ugly even for a low blood" demanding his money back while leaving the outfit Will had taken hours to make. Chilton had bought the supplies, had given him all, and left without care.

Will did not know why he chose to sneak into the ball, nor how he'd slipped in with such ease, but he had. He had yet to see the Duke, and if he did he'd be exposed to everyone as a low blood.

The Prince would have every right to order his removal, or worse his death. No one was allowed into the castle without invitation. This was near treason, but as Will took in the glamor and splendor around him he could not help but be in awe.

It was beautiful here.

He imagined living here, dancing with the Prince, and tears came to his eyes.

What a dream that would be.

Will knew he was not as comely as those here, would never be noticed, but tonight he thought he looked handsome. The suit he'd made for Chilton was royal blue with gold inlays, shining now under the bright lights, and his hair was perfectly curled while he'd shaved his usual beard.

He was a different person, a dream, and though he'd never get the Prince's attention he wanted to experience a life as one of the upper class if only just for the night.

He heard the music start up again, and though there many started to dance as he watched with envy. Will had never been a dancer, not really, and he'd never be able to come to court like others had when they were young. Now, at nearly thirty, he was way past marrying age.

Will knew he'd be alone forever but still it was nice to dream.

"Enjoying yourself?"

He jumped, surprised at the stranger who seemed to come out of nowhere. The man was dressed in white and blue, hardly noticeable among many others with the same - the royal colors were popular - but still there was something about him.

"Yes, I…yes," he said, turning away as he blushed sipping his wine.

"The Prince is rather late," the man said, "Just like one of *them* ."

Will frowned. "One of *them* ?"

"The royals," the man said, "You know, the…you know."

"I don't understand," Will said, glaring at him, "The royals are…it's…you shouldn't speak ill of the Prince."

The man scoffed. “Why? Is he going to strike me down? We have free will, man. Use yours. The Prince doesn’t want a sycophant as his intended, nor does he want a mewling whore who will open his legs just because….”

Will blinked back tears. “Sir, you….”

All of a sudden a hand came to Will’s shoulder and he froze when a voice like silk whispered near his ear.

“Is this man bothering you?”

He saw the man’s eyes widen, and Will knew without even turning that the Prince was behind him. The last of his line, Prince Hannibal was formidable and always wore black. Will could see his shirtsleeve clearly, and no one else at the ball wore the color.

“Y…yes,” Will said, feeling particularly spiteful, “He’s bothering me, Your Highness,” he whispered, bowing, “I…I beg your pardon, I should have…”

The Prince snapped his fingers, and guards came to drag the man away from them while everyone around the ballroom looked their way. Will blushed, frozen, and was close to tears before the Prince turned his cheek.

His mask was black and gold, as was his attire, and Will had seen the Prince in his carriage often or even at royal viewings but never so close. He was even more handsome than Will remembered.

“Say the word and he’ll be ruined by morning.”

“I…”

Prince Hannibal's gloved hand reached for Will's cheek again but paused before he took the glove off just before touching. Will shivered, feeling warm all over, and his throat felt dry.

"There's no need," he said, stepping back now as he lowered his head, "Thank you for your…intervention."

"You're very welcome," Prince Hannibal said, "I…I am unsure if I know you."

"I…."

"Your Highness!" someone yelled, making them both turn to see a fair haired woman coming forward, "We're delighted to finally see you! We…."

Will rushed away, unsure of himself, and knew he had to leave. He'd brought too much attention to himself already, entirely too much, and any minute now he'd be exposed. Will was almost glad for the crowd that formed as he tried to get away, but just as quickly as he tried to run his hand was grabbed.

He gasped as the Prince stood there, somehow sneaking through his admirers, and Will's shock gave way to surprise as his hand was kissed.

"Your Highness, I…."

"Dance with me."

Gasps echoed in Will's ears as he was pulled away, mesmerized by the Prince's gaze, and the music changed at once as they began their dance. Will did not need skill to dance with Prince Hannibal, the Prince was a natural lead, and as they moved around in wondrous twirls he held back tears.

This was a dream.

It had to be a dream.

The Prince pulled him in close, taking Will's breath, and smile made Will's own spread quickly.

"This is no dream," he said, "You're here, now, and…I may not know your face but…yours is the only one I see in this room."

"Highness I…"

"HE IS A FAKE!"

The yelling made Will's blood run cold.

Chilton.

How had he forgotten?

The Prince turned, shocked at the sudden outburst, and there walking furiously towards them both was Duke Chilton. Will was frozen, unable to move, as Chilton came forward up to rip the mask from his face.

"THIEF!" he growled, starting to rip WIll's clothes, "Your Highness, this…this is my tailor! He has stolen my clothing, and is masquerading as a high born! Will Graham is a low born gutter rat who should not have seen this room let alone…"

Will burst into tears, suddenly freed from his fear, and looked at Prince Hannibal. The anger he saw in the Prince's eyes made him terrified, and he waited for his punishment. He bowed his head, unable to do more than whimper, as suddenly he heard….nothing.

He heard nothing.

The world around them seemed to have gone quiet, and he looked up slowly with tears still on his face to see that no it had not gone quiet.

It had frozen.

Every person in the room was frozen in place, including Chilton, and when WIll looked at Prince Hannibal he looked back at him with black eyes.

“Your Highness, what…”

Prince Hannibal rushed up to Will, and put both hands on his cheeks.

“Why do you cry? Are you frightened?”

Will nodded as tears fell down his face. “Y…yes.”

“Of me?”

“Yes.”

Prince Hannibal frowned. “I would not hurt you, Will, not for anything.”

“I don’t understand,” Will whispered, his voice shaking, “You…you can…”

“I am more than I seem,” he said, caressing Will’s cheek still with such tenderness he could’ve wept, “But I would never hurt you, never you.”

“You do not know me.”

“I know you,” he said, “I…I knew you were not high born the moment you slipped into the castle. I could *feel you* , and I wanted to see what you would do. You did nothing but watch, and envy. You are the only person in this room I would take as my intended, if you would agree to my declaration.”

Will trembled under his touch, but leaned into it with every pressing moment.

“I am not worthy of you,” Will whispered, “I…I am not worthy of this moment, or this…the gift of your hand in marriage. I…I am a peasant, Highness, and…”

“Do not call me that,” Prince Hannibal said, his voice almost a growl, as his eyes still kept dark, “You are not like them, and never will be. Do not call me that.”

“What…what shall I call you?”

“Husband,” Prince Hannibal said, his voice thick, “I…I can take no other title from your lips.”

Will’s eyes widened. “I…”

“You are free to say no,” Prince Hannibal said, “But I beg of you to not. I…” he looked around them, “I can make them all forget. I can make them think you are one of them, if you need it, or I can, “ he glared at Chilton, “...exile Duke Chilton and disgrace him.”

Will’s heart skipped a beat. “Your power…you can do that?”

Prince Hannibal smiled. “I can do much,” he said, “And for you I would do anything.”

He didn’t know what to say.

There was fear in his heart now, worry that he was perhaps about to agree to marry a devil in disguise, but so much more of him was beyond happy at the thought of spending every hour dancing nights away in the castle ballroom where the Prince looked at him as he was now.

No one had ever before looked at him this way.

No one.

Tears fell down his cheeks as he stepped forward, and the Prince’s black eyes faded to a warm reddish brown.

“I do not want to hide,” he said, “If…if you’ll have me as a lowly peasant, I…I want them to know who it is that is standing by your side. Yes,” he said, “Yes, my soon to be husband….I will marry you.”

Prince Hannibal’s face lit up as he kissed Will deeply and took him into his arms. Will felt lightheaded as he was held tight, and when they parted he was panting for breath.

“I will care for you forever,” Prince Hannibal said, “And I….I will make you live just as long.”

Will frowned.

“What do you….”

The world came back to life, and Chilton looked confused at their closeness while Prince Hannibal's arm came around Will's back.

"He is a…"

"He is to be my husband," Prince Hannibal growled, "Peasant or not, he is to rule by my side and you….you will *never* set foot in this castle again. TAKE HIM AWAY!"

Several people started to whisper, their shock evident, and as Hannibal pulled him closer Will hardly heard his declaration.

I will make you live just as long.

What did he mean?

Was his husband to be—-immortal?

Will looked at him, so handsome and regal, confused as ever while Hannibal turned his way. He knew Hannibal could hear his thoughts, surely, and as he squeezed Will's hand he was unsure what was to come.

Hannibal had more to tell him, he was sure.

But was he ready to hear it?

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